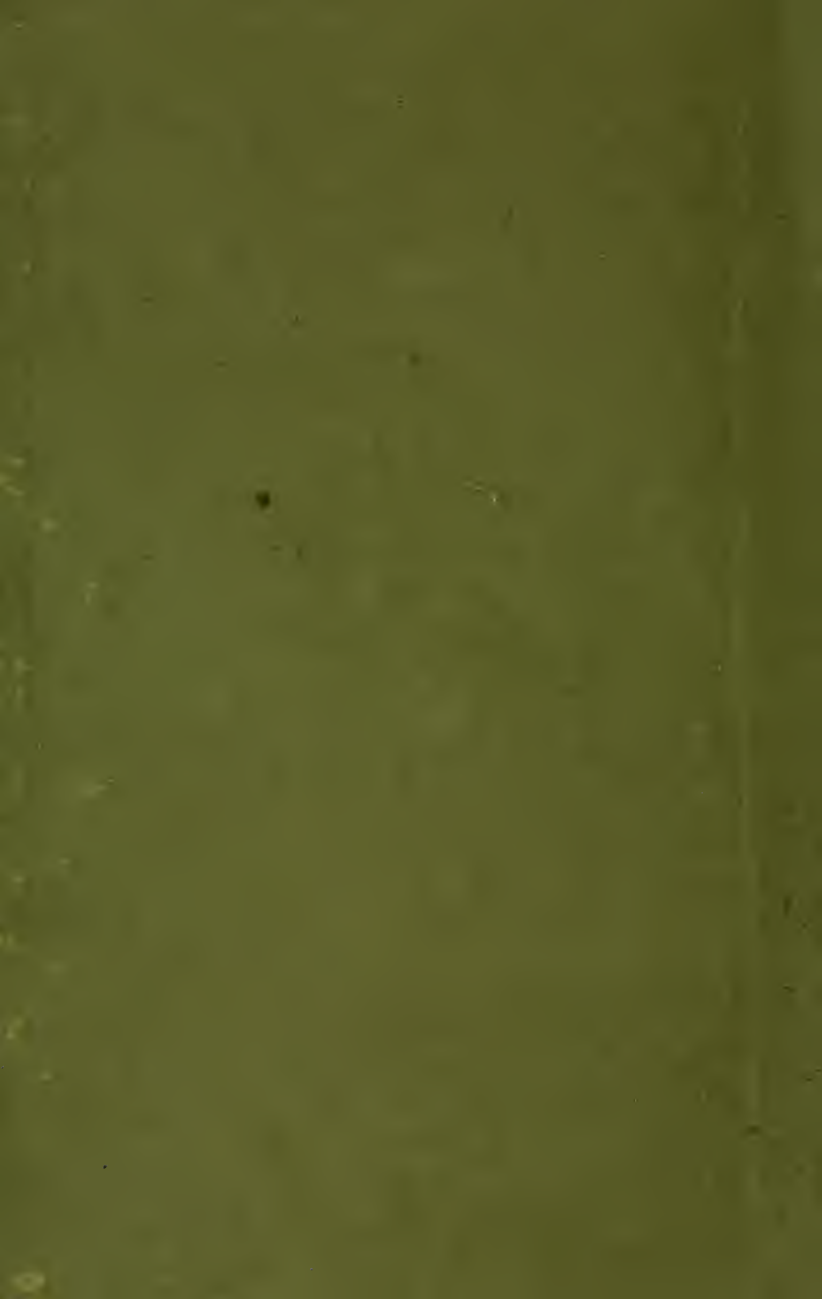
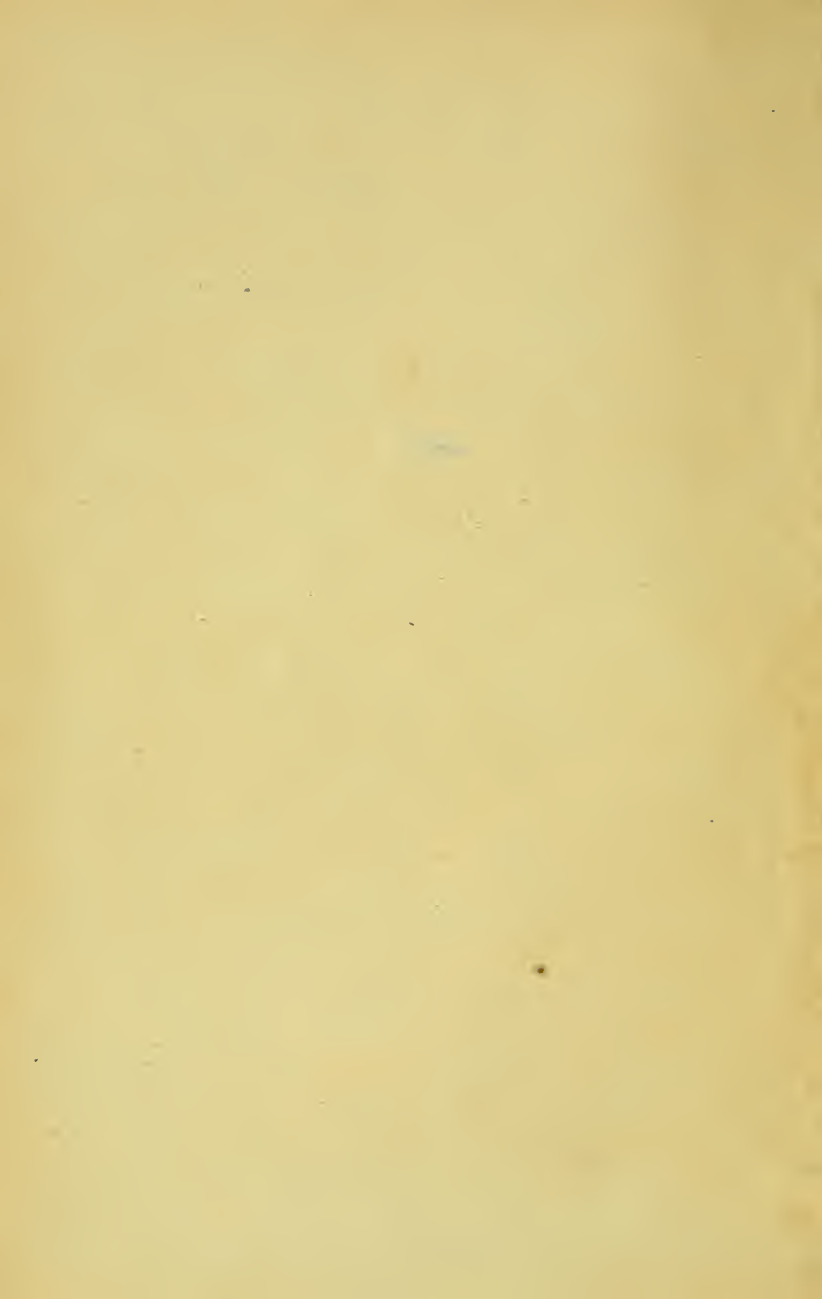


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I rose to my feet, and tottering towards the spot, looked in. It was an awful sight to look upon. The gully was some ten feet in depth; and at its bottom, among the weeds and cacti, a huge dog was engaged in tearing something that screamed and struggled. It was a man—an Indian. All was explained at a glance. The dog was Alp—the man was my late antagonist.—PAGE 293.



T H E

S C A L P H U N T E R S :

OR,

Adventures Among the Trappers.

BY

CAPTAIN MAYNE REID,

AUTHOR OF "RIFLE RANGERS," "THE WHITE CHIEF," "HUNTERS' FEAST," ETC., ETC.

Beautifully Illustrated from Designs by N. Orr.



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P R E F A C E .

ABOUT a year ago, I submitted to the public a book under the title of the "Rifle Rangers." It was prefaced as "truth poetically coloured"—truth for the groundwork, the flowering fancy—fact, enamelled by fiction—a mosaic of romance and reality.

Some have said that the "poetic colouring" was a thought too vivid. Perhaps it was so; but the general judgment upon that little effort not only satisfied, but gratified me; and to you, who have pronounced in its favour, I now offer "another of the same."

I shall be quite content, if your sentence upon this be marked by no greater severity.

I regret that my book exhibits no higher purpose than to amuse; but I have endeavoured to enamel its pages with a thousand facts—the result of my own experience. I have endeavoured to paint scenes of a strange land, as they are painted on my memory. If you *cannot* believe them true, may I hope that you will acknowledge their *vraisemblance*?

But why should I contend for their truthfulness, after declaring myself guilty of no higher aim than to amuse you? I will not, then. Let it *all* pass for a fiction—a novel, if you will—but, in return for this concession on my part, permit me to ask you—do you not think it a "novel kind" of a novel? If you answer this question in the affirmative, then have I won my purpose.

Before going farther, I have two words to say—one of warn-

PREFACE.

ing to you, and one of apology for myself. My scenes are of a sanguinary nature—some of them extremely so—but, alas! far less red than the realities, from which they were drawn. I know that this is but a lame apology for having depicted them; but I do not wish you to enter upon them unwarned. I am a coarse, crude, and careless writer. I lack those classic sympathies, which enable many of my brethren of the pen to give such elegant expression to their thoughts. If I *must* write, therefore, I am compelled—in order to interest—to lay more stress upon matter than manner—to describe the rude realities, rather than the refinements of thought and life. Moreover, my book is a *trapper* book. It is well known that trappers swear like troopers—some of them, in fact, worse. I have endeavoured to Christianize *my* trappers as much as lay in my power; but, I fear this emphatic phraseology is too much a keystone of their character to be omitted without undoing them altogether. To use a hackneyed figure, it would be “Hamlet with Hamlet left out.”

I, however, see a wide distinction between the *impiety* of a trapper's oath, and the *immorality* of an unchaste episode. The former can only shock the moral nerve for a moment—the latter may impress it for ever.

I trust, reader, that *you* are emancipated from that literary hypocrisy which refuses to perceive this distinction; and, trusting so, with confidence I leave my character in your hands.

MAYNE REID

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THE SCALP-HUNTERS;

OR,

ROMANTIC ADVENTURES IN NORTHERN MEXICO.

CHAPTER I.

THE WILD WEST.

UNROL the world's map, and look upon the great northern continent of America. Away to the wild West—away toward the setting sun—away beyond many a far meridian—let your eyes wander. Rest them, where golden rivers rise among the peaks that carry the eternal snow. Rest them there.

You are looking upon a land whose features are unfurrowed by human hands—still bearing the marks of the Almighty mould, as upon the morning of creation. A region, whose every object wears the impress of God's image. His ambient spirit lives in the silent grandeur of its mountains, and speaks in the roar of its mighty rivers. A region redolent of romance—rich in the reality of adventure.

Follow me, with the eye of your mind, through scenes of wild beauty, of savage sublimity.

I stand in an open plain. I turn my face to the north, to the south, to the east, and to the west; and, on all sides, behold the blue circle of the heavens girdling around me. Nor rock, nor tree, breaks the ring of the horizon. What covers the broad expanse between? Wood? water? grass? No—flowers! As far as my eye can range, it rests only on flowers—on beautiful flowers!

I am looking as on a tinted map—an enamelled picture brilliant with every hue of the prism.

Yonder is golden yellow, where the helianthus turns her dial-like face to the sun. Yonder, scarlet, where the malva erects its red banner. Here is a parterre of the purple monarda—there the euphorbia sheds its silver leaf. Yonder the orange predominates

in the showy flowers of the asclepia; and beyond, the eye roams over the pink blossoms of the cleomé.

The breeze stirs them. Millions of corollas are waving their gaudy standards. The tall stalks of the helianthus bend and rise in long undulations, like billows on a golden sea!

They are at rest again. The air is filled with odours, sweet as the perfumes of Araby or Ind. Myriads of insects flap their gay wings—flowers of themselves. The bee-birds skirr around, glancing like stray sunbeams; or, poised on whirring wings, drink from the nectared cups; and the wild bee, with laden limbs, clings among the honeyed pistils, or leaves for his far hive with a song of joy.

Who planted these flowers? Who hath woven them into these pictured parterres? Nature. It is her richest mantle—richer in its hues than the scarfs of Cashmere.

This is the “weed prairie.” It is misnamed. It is *the garden of God.*

* * * *

The scene is changed. I am in a plain as before, with the unbroken horizon circling around me. What do I behold? Flowers? No, there is not a flower in sight, but one vast expanse of living verdure! From north to south, from east to west, stretches the prairie meadow, green as an emerald, and smooth as the surface of a sleeping lake!

The wind is upon its bosom, sweeping the silken blades. They are in motion; and the verdure is dappled into lighter and darker shades, as the shadows of summer clouds fleeting across the sun. The eye wanders without resistance. Perchance, it encounters the dark hirsute forms of the buffalo, or traces the tiny outlines of the antelope. Perchance, it follows, in pleased wonder, the far-wild gallop of a snow-white steed.

This is the “grass prairie,” the boundless pasture of the bison.

* * * *

The scene changes. The earth is no longer level, but treeless and verdant as ever. Its surface exhibits a succession of parallel undulations, here and there swelling into smooth round hills. It is covered with a soft turf of brilliant greenness. These undulations remind one of the ocean after a mighty storm, when the crisped foam has died upon the waves, and the big swell comes bowling in. They look as though they had once been such waves, that, by an omnipotent mandate, had been transformed to earth, and suddenly stood still!

This is the “rolling prairie.”

* * * *

Again the scene changes. I am among green swards and bright flowers; but the view is broken by groves and clumps of copse-wood. The frondage is varied, its tints vivid, and its outlines soft and graceful. As I move forward, new landscapes open up continuously—views parklike and picturesque. “Gangs” of

buffalo, "herds" of antelope, and "droves" of wild horses mottle the far vistas. Turkeys run into the coppice; and pheasants whirr up from the path.

Where are the owners of these lands, of these flocks and fowls? Where are the houses—the palaces—that should appertain to these lordly parks? I look forward, expecting to see the turrets of tall mansions spring up over the groves. But no. For hundreds of miles around no chimney sends forth its smoke. Although with a cultivated aspect, this region is only trodden by the moccasoned foot of the hunter, and his enemy, the red Indian.

These are the "mottes"—the "islands" of the prairie sea.

* * * *

I am in the deep forest. It is night, and the log-fire throws out its vermilion glare, painting the objects that surround our bivouac. Huge trunks stand thickly around us: and massive limbs, gray and giant-like, stretch out and over. I notice the bark. It is cracked, and clings in broad scales crisping outward. Long snake-like parasites creep from tree to tree—coiling the trunks, as though they were serpents, and would crush them! There are no leaves overhead. They have ripened, and fallen; but the white Spanish moss, festooned along the branches, hangs weeping down like the drapery of a death-bed!

Prostrate trunks—yards in diameter, and half-decayed—lie along the ground. Their ends exhibit vast cavities, where the porcupine and opossum have taken shelter from the cold.

My comrades—wrapped in their blankets, and stretched upon the dead leaves—have gone to sleep. They lie with their feet to the fire, and their heads resting in the hollow of their saddles. The horses, standing around a tree, and tied to its lower branches, seem also to sleep. I am awake, and listening. The wind is high up, whistling among the twigs, and causing the long white streamers to oscillate. It utters a wild and melancholy music. There are few other sounds, for it is winter, and the tree-frog and cicada are silent. I hear the crackling knots in the fire—the rustling of dry leaves "swirled" up by a stray gust—the "coo-whoa-a" of the white owl—the bark of the raccoon—and, at intervals, the dismal howling of wolves. These are the nocturnal voices of the *winter* forest. They are savage sounds; yet there is a chord in my bosom that vibrates under their influence; and my spirit is tinged with romance, as I lie and listen.

* * * *

The forest in autumn—still bearing its full frondage. The leaves resemble flowers, so bright are their hues. They are red, and yellow, and golden, and brown. The woods are warm and glorious now; and the birds flutter among the laden branches. The eye wanders delighted down long vistas, and over sunlit glades. It is caught by the flashing of gaudy plumage, the golden-green of the paroquet, the blue of the jay, and the orange wing of the oriole. The red-bird flutters lower down in the

coppice of green pawpaws, or amid the amber leaflets of the beechen thicket. Hundreds of tiny wings flit through the openings, twinkling in the sun like the glancing of gems.

The air is filled with music—sweet sounds of love. The bark of the squirrel, the cooing of mated doves, the “rat-ta-ta” of the pecker, and the constant and measured chirrup of the cicada, are all ringing together. High up, on a topmost twig, the mock-bird pours forth his mimic note, as though he would shame all other songsters into silence.

* * * *

I am in a country of brown barren earth and broken outlines. There are rocks, and clefts, and patches of sterile soil. Strange vegetable forms grow in the clefts and hang over the rocks. Others are spheroidal in shape, resting upon the surface of the parched earth. Others rise vertically to a great height, like carved and fluted columns. Some throw out branches, crooked, shaggy branches, with hirsute oval leaves. Yet there is a homogeneity about all these vegetable forms—in their colour, in their fruit, and flowers—that proclaims them of one family. They are cacti. It is a forest of the Mexican *nopal*. Another singular plant is here. It throws out long thorny leaves that curve downward. It is the agave, the far-famed mezcal-plant of Mexico. Here and there, mingled with the cacti, are trees of acacia and mezquite—the denizens of the desert land. No bright object relieves the eye; no bird pours its melody into the ear. The lonely owl flaps away into the impassable thicket—the rattlesnake glides under its scanty shade—and the coyoté skulks through its silent glades.

* * * *

I have climbed mountain after mountain, and still I behold peaks soaring far above, crowned with the snow that never melts. I stand upon beetling cliffs, and look into chasms that yawn beneath, sleeping in the silence of desolation. Great fragments have fallen into them, and lie piled upon one another. Others hang threatening over, as if waiting for some concussion of the atmosphere to hurl them from their balance. Dark precipices frown me into fear; and my head reels with a dizzy faintness. I hold to the pine-tree shaft, or the angle of the firmer rock.

Above, and below, and around me, are mountains piled on mountains in chaotic confusion. Some are bald and bleak: others exhibit traces of vegetation, in the dark needles of the pine and cedar, whose stunted forms half-grow, half-hang from the cliffs. Here, a cone-shaped peak soars up till it is lost in snow and clouds. There, a ridge elevates its sharp outline against the sky; while along its sides lie huge boulders of granite, as though they had been hurled from the hands of Titan giants!

A fearful monster—the grizzly bear—drags his body along the high ridges; the carcajou squats upon the projecting rock, waiting the elk that must pass to the water below; and the bighorn bounds

from crag to crag in search of his shy mate. Along the pine-branch the bald buzzard whets his filthy beak; and the war-eagle, soaring over all, cuts sharply against the blue field of the heavens!

These are the Rocky Mountains—the American Andes—the colossal vertebræ of the continent!

* * * *

Such are the aspects of the wild West—such is the scene of our drama.

Let us raise the curtain, and bring on the characters.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRAIRIE MERCHANTS.

"New Orleans, April 3d, 18—.

"DEAR ST. VRAIN,

"Our young friend, M. Henry Haller, goes to St. Louis in 'search of the picturesque.' See that he be put through a 'regular course of sprouts.'

"Yours, LUIS WALTON.

"Charles St. Vrain, Esq.

"Planter's Hotel,
"St. Louis."

With this laconic epistle in my waistcoat pocket, I debarked at St. Louis on the 10th of April, and drove to the "Planter's."

After getting my baggage stowed, and my horse (a favourite I had brought with me) stabled, I put on a clean shirt; and, descending to the "office," inquired for M. St. Vrain.

He was not there. He had gone up the Missouri River, several days before.

This was a disappointment, as I had brought no other introduction to St. Louis. But I endeavoured to await with patience the return of M. St. Vrain. He was expected back in less than a week.

Day after day, I mounted my horse. I rode up to the "Mounds," and out upon the prairies. I lounged about the hotel; and smoked my cigar in its fine piazza. I drank "sherry cobbler" in the saloon; and read the journals in the "reading-room."

With these and such like occupations, I killed time for three whole days.

There was a party of gentlemen stopping at the hotel, who seemed to know each other well. I might call them a clique; but that is not a good word, and does not express what I mean.

They appeared, rather, a band of friendly, jovial fellows. They strolled together through the streets, and sat side by side at the *table d'hôte*, where they usually remained long after the regular diners had retired. I noticed that they drank the most expensive wines, and smoked the finest cigars the house afforded.

My attention was attracted to these men. I was struck with their peculiar bearing—their erect, Indian-like carriage in the streets, combined with a boyish gayety, so characteristic of the Western American.

They dressed nearly alike; in fine black cloth, white linen, satin vests, and diamond pins. They wore the whisker full, but smoothly trimmed; and several of them sported moustaches. Their hair fell curling over their shoulders; and most of them wore their collars turned down, displaying healthy-looking, suntanned throats. I was struck with a *vraisemblance* in their physiognomy. Their faces did not resemble each other: but there was an unmistakable similarity in the expression of the eye—no doubt, the mark that had been made by like occupations and experience.

Were they *sportsmen*? No. The sportsman's hands are whiter. There is more jewelry on his fingers; his waistcoat is of a gayer pattern; and altogether his dress will be more gaudy and super-elegant. Moreover, the sportsman lacks that air of free-and-easy confidence. He dares not assume it. He *may live* in the hotel; but he must be quiet and unobtrusive. The sportsman is a bird of prey; hence, like all birds of prey, his habits are silent and solitary. They are not of his profession.

"Who are these gentlemen?" I inquired, from a person who sat by me, indicating to him the men of whom I have spoken.

"The prairie men."

"The prairie men!"

"Yes. The Santa Fé traders."

"Traders!" I echoed, in some surprise, not being able to connect such *elegantes* with any ideas of trade or the prairies.

"Yes," continued my informant. "That large, fine-looking man, in the middle, is Bent—Bill Bent, as he is called. The gentleman on his right is young Sublette; the other, standing on his left, is one of the Choteaus; and that is the sober Jerry Folger."

"These, then, are the celebrated prairie merchants?"

"Precisely so."

I sat, eyeing them with increased curiosity. I observed that they were looking at *me*; and that I was the subject of their conversation.

Presently, one of them—a dashing-like young fellow—parted from the group, and walked up to me.

"Were you inquiring for Mr. St. Vrain?" he asked.

"I was."

"Charles?"

"Yes, that is the name."

"I am"—

I pulled out my note of introduction, and handed it to the gentleman; who glanced over its contents.

"My dear friend," said he, grasping me cordially; "devilish sorry I have not been here. I came down the river this morning. How stupid of Walton not to superscribe to Bill Bent. How long have you been up?"

"Three days. I arrived on the 10th."

"By the Lord! you are lost. Come, let me make you acquainted. Here, Bent! Bill! Jerry!"—

And, the next moment, I had shaken hands with one and all of the traders; of which fraternity, I found that my new friend, St. Vrain, was a member.

"First gong that?" asked one, as the loud scream of a gong came through the gallery.

"Yes," replied Bent, consulting his watch. "Just time to 'licker.' Come along!"

Bent moved toward the saloon; and we all followed, *nemine dissentiente*.

The spring season was setting in; and the young mint had sprouted—a botanical fact with which my new acquaintances appeared to be familiar, as one and all of them ordered a "mint julep." This beverage, in the mixing and drinking, occupied our time until the second scream of the gong summoned us to dinner.

"Sit with us, Mr. Haller," said Bent; "I am sorry we didn't know you sooner—you have been lonely."

And so saying, he led the way into the dining-room, followed by his companions and myself.

I need not describe a dinner at the Planter's, St. Louis, with its venison steaks, its buffalo tongues, its "prairie chickens," and its delicious frog "fixings" from the Illinois "bottom." No. I would not describe the dinner,—and what followed, I am afraid I could not.

We sat until we had the table to ourselves. Then the cloth was removed; and we commenced smoking *regalias*, and drinking madeira at *twelve dollars a bottle!* This was ordered in by some one, not in single bottles, but by the half-dozen! I remember thus far well enough; and that, whenever I took up a wine-card or a pencil, these articles were snatched out of my fingers.

I remember listening to stories of wild adventures among the Pawnees, and the Comanches, and the Blackfeet, until I was filled with interest, and became enthusiastic about prairie-life. Then some one asked me, would I not like to join them in "a trip?" Upon this, I made a speech, and proposed to accompany my new acquaintances on their next expedition; and then St. Vrain said I was just the man for their life; and this pleased me

nighly. Then some one sang a Spanish song, with a guitar, I think; and some one else danced an Indian war-dance; and then we all rose to our feet, and chorused the "Star-spangled Banner;" and I remember nothing else after this, until next morning, when I remember well that I awoke with a splitting headache.

I had hardly time to reflect on my previous night's folly, when the door opened, and St. Vrain, with half-a-dozen of my table companions, rushed into the room. They were followed by a waiter, who carried several large glasses topped with ice, and filled with a pale amber-coloured liquid.

"A sherry cobbler, Mr. Haller," cried one; "best thing in the world for you—drain it, my boy. It'll cool you in a squirrel's jump."

I drank off the refreshing beverage, as desired.

"Now, my dear friend," said St. Vrain, "you feel a hundred per cent. better? But tell me! were you in earnest when you spoke of going with us across the plains? We start in a week; I shall be sorry to part with you so soon."

"But I *was* in earnest. I *am* going with you, if you will only show me how I am to set about it."

"Nothing easier—buy yourself a horse."

"I have got one."

"Then a few coarse articles of dress, a rifle, a pair of pistols, a"—

"Stop, stop—I have all these things. That is not what I would be at, but this. You, gentlemen, carry goods to Santa Fé. You double, or treble, your money on them. Now I have 10,000 dollars in a bank here. What should hinder me to combine profit with pleasure, and invest it as you?"

"Nothing—nothing! A good idea," answered several.

"Well, then, if any of you will have the goodness to go with me, and show me what sort of merchandise I am to lay in for the Santa Fé market, I will pay for his wine-bill at dinner; and that's no small commission, I think."

The prairie men laughed loudly, declaring they would all go a-shopping with me; and, after breakfast, we started in a body, arm-in-arm.

Before dinner I had invested nearly all my disposable funds in printed calicoes, long knives, and looking-glasses; leaving just money enough to purchase mule-wagons, and hire teamsters at Independence, our point of departure for the "plains."

A few days after, with my new companions, I was steaming it up the Missouri on our way to the trackless prairies of the "Far West."

CHAPTER III.

THE "PRAIRIE FEVER."

AFTER a week spent in Independence, buying mules and wagons, we took the route over the plains. There were a hundred wagons in the "caravan," and nearly twice that number of teamsters and attendants. Two of the capacious vehicles contained all my "plunder;" and to manage them, I had hired a couple of lathy, long-haired Missourians. I had also engaged a Canadian voyageur, named Godé, as a sort of attendant or *compagnon*.

Where are the glossy *elegantes* of the Planter's Hotel? One would suppose they had been left behind; as here are none but men in hunting-shirts and slouch hats. Yes—but under these hats we recognise their faces, and in these rude shirts we have the same jovial fellows as ever. The silky black and the diamonds have disappeared: for now the traders flourish under the *prairie* costume. I will endeavour to give an idea of the appearance of my companions by describing my own; for I am "tricked out" very much like themselves.

I wear a hunting-shirt of dressed deer-skin. It is a garment more after the style of an ancient tunic than any thing that I can think of. It is of a light-yellow colour, beautifully stitched and embroidered; and the cape—for it has a short cape—is fringed by tags cut out of the leather itself. The skirt is also bordered by a similar fringe, and hangs full and low. A pair of "savers" of scarlet cloth cover my limbs to the thigh; and under these are strong jean pantaloons, heavy boots, and big, brass spurs. A coloured cotton shirt, a blue neck-tie, and a broad-brimmed Guayaquil hat complete the articles of my every-day dress. Behind me, on the cantle of my saddle, may be observed a bright red object, folded into a cylindrical form. That is my "Mackinaw," a great favourite—for it makes my bed by night, and my great-coat on other occasions. There is a small slit in the middle of it, through which I thrust my head in cold or rainy weather; and I am thus covered to the ankles.

As I have said, my *compagnons du voyage* are similarly attired. There may be a difference of colour in the blanket or the leggings,

or the shirt may be of other materials; but that I have described may be taken as a "character dress."

We are all somewhat similarly armed and equipped. For my part, I may say that I am "armed to the teeth." In my holsters I carry a pair of Colt's large-sized revolvers, six shots each. In my belt is another pair of the small size, with five shots each. In addition, I have a light rifle, making in all twenty-three shots, which I have learned to deliver in as many seconds of time. Failing with all these, I carry in my belt a long, shining blade, known as a "bowie-knife." This last is my hunting-knife, my dining-knife, and, in short, my knife of "all work." For accoutrements I have a pouch and flask, both slung under the right arm. I have also a large gourd canteen, and a haversack for my rations. So have all my companions.

But we are differently mounted. Some ride saddle-mules; others stride a mustang; while a few have brought their favourite American horses. I am of this number. I ride a dark-brown stallion, with black legs, and muzzle like the withered fern. He is a half Arab, and of perfect proportions. He is called "Moro," a Spanish name, given him by the Louisiana planter from whom I bought him, but why I do not know. I have retained the name, and he answers to it readily. He is strong, fleet, and beautiful. Many of my friends fancy him on the route, and offer large prices for him; but these do not tempt me, for my Moro serves me well. Every day I grow more and more attached to him. My dog, Alp, a San Bernard, that I bought from a Swiss *émigré* in St. Louis, hardly comes in for a tithe of my affections.

I find, in referring to my note-book, that for weeks we travelled over the prairies, without any incident of unusual interest. To me the scenery was interest enough; and I do not remember a more striking picture than to see the long caravan of wagons—the "prairie ships"—deployed over the plain, or crawling slowly up some gentle slope—their white tilts contrasting beautifully with the deep green of the earth. At night too, the camp, with its *corralled* wagons, and horses picketed around, was equally a picture. The scenery was altogether new to me, and imbued me with impressions of a peculiar character. The streams were fringed with tall groves of cotton-wood trees, whose column-like stems supported a thick frondage of silvery leaves. These groves, meeting at different points, walled in the view, so dividing the prairies from one another, that we seemed to travel through vast fields fenced by colossal hedges!

We crossed many rivers, fording some, and floating our wagons over others that were deeper and wider. Occasionally we saw deer and antelope; and our hunters shot a few of these; but we had not yet reached the range of the buffalo. Once we stopped a day to recruit in a wooded "bottom," where the grass was plenty, and the water pure. Now and then, too, we were halted to mend

a broken tongue or an axle, or help a "stalled" wagon from its miry bed.

I had very little trouble with my particular division of the caravan. My Missourians turned out to be a pair of staunch hands, who could assist one another, without making a desperate affair of every slight accident.

The grass had sprung up, and our mules and oxen, instead of thinning down, every day grew fatter upon it. Moro, therefore, came in for a better share of the maize that I had brought in my wagons, and which kept my favourite in fine, travelling condition.

As we approached the Arkansas, we saw mounted Indians disappearing over the swells. They were Pawnees; and for several days clouds of these dusky warriors hung upon the skirts of the caravan. But they knew our strength, and kept at a wary distance from our long rifles.

To me every day brought something new, either in the incidents of the "voyage," or the features of the landscape.

Godé—who had been by turns a *voyageur*, a hunter, a trapper, and a *coureur du bois*—in our private dialogues, had given me an insight into many an item of prairie-craft, thus enabling me to cut quite a respectable figure among my new comrades. St. Vrain too—whose frank, generous manner had already won my confidence—spared no pains to make the trip agreeable to me. What with the wild gallops by day, and the wilder tales by the night watch-fires, I became intoxicated with the romance of my new life. *I had caught the "prairie fever!"*

So my companions told me, laughing! I did not understand them then. I knew what they meant afterwards. The prairie fever! Yes. I was just then in process of being inoculated by that strange disease. It grew upon me apace. The dreams of home began to die within me; and, with these, the illusory ideas of many a young and foolish ambition. Died away, too—dead out of my heart—the allurements of the great city—the memory of soft eyes and silken tresses—the impress of amorous emotions—foes to human happiness—all died away, as if they had never been, or I had never felt them!

My strength increased, both physically and intellectually. I experienced a buoyancy of spirits and a vigour of body I had never known before. I felt a pleasure in action. My blood seemed to rush warmer and swifter through my veins; and I fancied that my eyes reached to a more distant vision. I could look boldly upon the sun, without quivering in my glance.

Had I imbibed a portion of the divine essence that lives, and moves, and has its being in those vast solitudes?

Who can answer this?

The prairie fever! I feel it now! While I am penning these memories, my fingers twitch to grasp the reins—my knees quiver to press the sides of my noble horse, and wildly wander over the verdant billows of the prairie sea.

CHAPTER IV.

A RIDE UPON A BUFFALO BULL.

WE had been out about two weeks, when we struck the Arkansas "Bend," about six miles below the "Plum Buttes." Here our wagons corralled and camped.

So far we had seen but little of the buffalo: only a stray bull; or at most two or three together; and these shy. It was now the "running season," but none of the great droves—love-maddened—had crossed us.

"Yonder!" cried St. Vrain, "fresh hump for supper!"

We looked north-west, as indicated by our friend. Along the escarpment of a low table, five dark objects broke the line of the horizon. A glance was enough—they were buffaloes.

As St. Vrain spoke, we were about slipping off our saddles. Back went the girth buckles with a "sneck"—down came the stirrups—up went we, and off in the "twinkling of a goat's eye."

Half a score or so started—some, like myself, for the sport—while others—old hunters—had the "meat" in their eye.

We had made but a short day's march; our horses were still fresh; and, in three times as many minutes, the three miles that lay between us and the game were reduced to one. Here, however, we were "winded." Some of the party, like myself, green upon the prairies, disregarding advice, had ridden straight ahead, and the bulls snuffed us on the wind. When within a mile, one of them threw up his shaggy front, snorted, struck the ground with his hoof, rolled over, rose up again, and dashed off at full speed, followed by his four companions.

It remained to us now either to abandon the chase, or put our horses to their mettle, and "catch up." The latter course was adopted; and we galloped forward. All at once we found ourselves riding up to what appeared to be a clay wall six feet high. It was a stair between two tables; and ran right and left, as far as the eye could reach, without the semblance of a gap!

This was an obstacle that caused us to rein up and reflect. Some wheeled their horses, and commenced riding back; while half-a-dozen of us, better mounted—among whom were St. Vrain, and my voyageur Godé—not wishing to give up the chase so easily, put to the spur, and cleared the scarp.

From this point it cost us a five miles' gallop, and our horses a white sweat, to come up with the hindmost—a young cow—who fell, bored by a bullet from every rifle in the party.

As the others had gained some distance ahead, and we had meat enough for all, we reined up; and dismounting, set about "removing the hair." This operation was a short one under the skilful knives of the hunters. We had now leisure to look back, and calculate the distance we had ridden from camp.

"Eight miles, every inch!" cried one.

"We're close to the trail," said St. Vrain, pointing to some old wagon-tracks that marked the route of the Santa Fé traders.

"Well?"

"If we ride into camp, we shall have to ride back in the morning. It will be sixteen extra miles for our cattle."

"True."

"Let us stay here, then. Here's water and grass. There's buffalo-meat; and yonder's a wagon load of 'chips.' We have our blankets—what more do we want?"

"I say camp where we are."

"And I."

"And I."

In a minute, the girth-buckles flew open, our saddles were lifted off, and our panting horses were cropping the curly bunches of the prairie grass, within the circles of their *cabriestoes*.

A crystal rivulet—the "arroyo" of the Spaniards—stole away southward to the Arkansas. On the bank of this rivulet, and under one of its bluffs, we chose a spot for our bivouac. The *bois de vache* was collected—a fire was kindled—and "hump steaks," spitted on sticks, were soon sputtering in the blaze. Luckily, St. Vrain and I had our flasks along; and as each of them contained a pint of pure Cognac, we managed to make a tolerable supper. The old hunters had their pipes and tobacco; my friend and I our cigars; and we sat around the ashes to a late hour, smoking, and listening to wild tales of mountain adventure.

At length the watch was told off—the lariats were shortened—the picket-pins driven home—and my comrades, rolling themselves up in their blankets, rested their heads in the hollow of their saddles, and went to sleep.

There was a man named Hibbets in our party, who, from his habits of somnolency, had earned the sobriquet of "Sleepyhead." For this reason, the first watch had been assigned to him, being the least dangerous—as Indians seldom make their attacks until the hour of soundest sleep, that before daybreak.

Hibbets had climbed to his post—the top of the bluff—where he could command a view of the surrounding prairie.

Before night had set in, I had noticed a very beautiful spot on the bank of the arroyo, about two hundred yards from where my comrades lay. A sudden fancy came into my head to sleep there; and taking up my rifle, robe, and blanket—at the same time calling to "Sleepyhead" to wake me in case of alarm—I proceeded thither.

The ground, shelving gradually down to the arroyo, was covered with soft buffalo grass, thick and dry, as good a bed as was ever pressed by sleepy mortal. On this I spread my robe; and, folding my blanket around me, lay down, cigar in mouth, to smoke myself asleep.

It was a lovely moonlight—so clear that I could easily distinguish the colours of the prairie flowers, the silver euphorbias, the golden sunflowers, and the scarlet malvas—that fringed the banks of the arroyo at my feet. There was an enchanting stillness in the air, broken only by an occasional whine from the prairie wolf, the distant snoring of my companions, and the "crop-crop" of our horses, shortening the crisp grass.

I lay a good while awake, until my cigar burned up to my lips—we smoke them close on the prairies—then, spitting out the stump, I turned over on my side, and was soon in the land of dreams.

I could not have been asleep many minutes, when I felt sensible of a strange noise, like distant thunder, or the roaring of a waterfall. The ground seemed to tremble beneath me!

"We are going to have a dash of a thunder-shower," thought I, still half dreaming, half sensible to impressions from without; and I drew the folds of my blanket closer about me, and again slept.

I was awakened by a noise like thunder indeed—like the trampling of a thousand hoofs and the lowing of a thousand oxen! The earth echoed and trembled. I could hear the shouts of my comrades, the voices of St. Vrain and Godé, the latter calling out—

"Sac-r-ré! Monsieur; garde les buffles!"

I saw they had drawn the horses, and were hurrying them under the bluff.

I sprang to my feet, flinging aside my blanket. A fearful spectacle was before me. Away to the west, as far as the eye could reach, the prairie seemed in motion. Black waves rolled over its undulating outlines, as though some burning mountain was pouring down its lava upon the plains. A thousand bright

spots flashed and fitted along the moving surface like jets of fire. The ground shook, men shouted, horses reared upon their ropes, neighing wildly. My dog barked and howled, running around me!

For a moment I thought I was dreaming; but no, the scene was too real to be mistaken for a vision. I saw the border of the black wave within ten paces of me, and still approaching! Then, and not till then, did I recognise the shaggy crests and glaring eyeballs of the buffalo!

"God of heaven! I am in their track. I will be trampled to death!"

It was too late to attempt an escape by running. I seized my rifle, and fired at the foremost of the band. The effect of my shot was not perceptible. The water of the arroyo was dashed in my face. A huge bull, ahead of the rest, furious and snorting, plunged through the stream, and up the slope. I was lifted and tossed high into the air. I was thrown rearwards, and fell upon a moving mass. I did not feel hurt nor stunned. I felt myself carried onward upon the backs of several animals, that, in the dense drove, ran close together. These, frightened at their strange burden, bellowed loudly, and dashed on to the front. A sudden thought struck me; and, fixing on that which was most under me, I dropped my legs astride of him, embracing his hump, and clutching the long woolly hair that grew upon his neck. The animal "routed" with extreme terror; and, plunging forward, soon *headed the band!*

This was exactly what I wanted; and on we went over the prairie—the bull running at top speed—believing, no doubt, that he had a panther or a catamount between his shoulders!

I had no desire to disabuse him of this belief; and, lest he should deem me altogether harmless, and come to a halt, I slipped out my bowie, which happened to be "handy," and pricked him up, whenever he showed symptoms of lagging. At every fresh touch of the "spur," he roared out, and ran forward at a redoubled pace.

My danger was still extreme. The drove was coming on behind with a front of nearly a mile! I could not have cleared it, had the bull stopped, and left me on the prairie.

Notwithstanding the peril I was in, I could not resist laughing at my ludicrous situation. I felt as one does when looking at a good comedy.

We struck through a village of "prairie dogs." Here I fancied the animal was about to turn and run back. This brought my mirth to a sudden pause; but the buffalo usually runs in a "bee line," and fortunately mine made no exception to the law. On he went, sinking to the knees, kicking the dust from the conical hills, snorting and bellowing with rage and terror.

The "Plum buttes" were directly in the line of our course. I had seen this from the start; and knew that if I could reach



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them, I would be safe. They were nearly three miles from the bluff where we had bivouacked; but, in my ride, I fancied them ten!

A small one rose over the prairie, several hundred yards nearer than the main heights. Towards this I pricked the foaming bull in a last stretch; and he brought me cleverly within a hundred yards of its base.

It was now time to take leave of my dusky companion. I could have slaughtered him, as I leaned over his back. My knife rested upon the most vulnerable part of his huge body. No! I would not have slain that buffalo for the Koh-i-noor.

Untwisting my finger from his thick fleece, I slipped down over his tail, and, without as much as saying "Good-night," ran with all my speed towards the knoll. I climbed up; and, sitting down upon a loose boulder of rock, looked out over the prairie.

The moon was still shining brightly. My late companion had halted not far from where I had left him, and stood glaring back, with a look of extreme bewilderment! There was something so comical in the sight, that I yelled with laughter, as I sat securely on my perch.

I looked to the south-west. As far as the eye could see, the prairie was black and moving. The living wave came rolling onward and toward me; but I could now observe it in safety. The myriads of glancing eyes, sparkling like phosphoric gleams, no longer flashed terror.

The drove was still half a mile distant. I thought I saw quick gleams, and heard the report of fire-arms away over its left border; but I could not be certain. I had begun to think of the fate of my comrades; and this gave me hopes that they were safe.

The buffaloes approached the butte on which I was seated; and, perceiving the obstacle, suddenly forked into two great belts, and swept right and left around it. What struck me at this moment as curious was, that *my* bull—my particular bull—instead of waiting till his comrades had come up, and falling in among the foremost—suddenly tossed up his head, and galloped off, as if a pack of wolves had been after him! He ran towards the outside of the band. When he had reached a point that placed him fairly beyond the flank, I could see him closing in, and moving on with the rest.

This strange tactic of my late companion puzzled me at the time, but I afterwards learned that it was sound strategy on his part. Had he remained where I had parted with him, the foremost bulls coming up would have mistaken him for an individual of some other tribe, and would certainly have gored him to death!

I sat upon the rock for nearly two hours, silently watching the sable stream as it poured past. I was on an island in the midst of a black and glittering sea. At one time I fancied I was moving, that the butte was sailing onward, and the buffaloes were standing

still! My head swam with dizziness, and I leaped to my feet to drive away the strange illusion.

The torrent rolled onward; and at length, the hindmost went straggling past. I descended from the knoll; and commenced groping my way over the black, trodden earth. What was lately a green sward now presented the aspect of ground freshly ploughed, and trampled by droves of oxen!

A number of white animals, resembling a flock of sheep, passed near me. They were wolves hanging upon the skirts of the herd.

I spurred on, keeping to the southward. At length, I heard voices; and, in the clear moonlight, could see several horsemen galloping in circles over the plain. I shouted "Halloa!" A voice answered mine; and one of the horsemen came galloping up; it was St. Vrain.

"Why, Lord bless me, Haller!" cried he, reining up, and bending from his saddle to get a better view of me, "is it you or your ghost? As I sit here, it's the man himself, and alive!"

"Never in better condition," I replied.

"But where did you come from? the clouds? the sky? Where?" And his question was echoed by the others, who at this moment were shaking me by the hand, as if they had not seen me for a twelvemonth!

Godé seemed to be the most perplexed man of the party.

"*Mon Dieu!* run over—tramp by von million dam buffles, et pas mort! Cr-r-ré matin!"

"We were hunting for your body, or rather for the fragments of it," said St. Vrain. "We had searched every foot of the prairie for a mile round; and had almost come to the conclusion that the fierce brutes had eaten you up."

"Eat Monsieur up! No! tre million buffles no him eat. *Mon Dieu!* Ha, Sleephead pe dam!"

This exclamation of the Canadian was addressed to Hibbets, who had failed to warn my comrades of where I lay, and thus placed me in such a dangerous predicament.

"We saw you tossed in the air," continued St. Vrain, "and fall right into the thick of them. Then, of course, we gave you up. But how, in God's name, have you got clear?"

I related my adventure to my wondering comrades.

"*Par Dieu,*" cried Godé, "*un garçon tre bizarre—une aventure tre merveilleuse!*"

From that hour I was looked upon as a "captain" on the prairies.

My comrades had made good work of it, as a dozen dark objects that lay upon the plain testified. They had found my rifle and blankets—the latter trodden into the earth.

St. Vrain had still a few drops in his flask; and after swallowing these, and again placing the guard, we returned to our prairie couches, and slept out the night.

CHAPTER V.

IN A BAD "FIX."

A FEW days afterwards, another "adventure" befell me; and I began to think that I was destined to become a hero among the "mountain men."

A small party of the traders—myself among the number—had pushed forward ahead of the caravan. Our object was to arrive at Santa Fé a day or two before the wagons, in order to have every thing arranged with the governor for their entrance into that capital. We took the route by the Cimmaron.

Our road, for a hundred miles or so, lay through a barren desert, without game, and almost without water. The buffalo had already disappeared, and deer were equally scarce. We had to content ourselves on the dried meat which we had brought from the settlements. We were in the deserts of the *Artemisia*. Now and then we could see a stray antelope bounding away before us, but keeping far out of range. They too seemed to be unusually shy.

On the third day after leaving the caravan, as we were riding near the Cimmaron, I thought I observed a pronged head disappearing behind a swell in the prairie. My companions were skeptical, and would none of them go with me; so, wheeling out of the trail, I started alone. One of the men—for Godé was behind—kept charge of my dog, as I did not choose to take him with me, lest he might alarm the antelopes. My horse was fresh and willing; and whether successful or not, I knew that I could easily overtake the party by camping-time.

I struck directly towards the spot where I had seen the object. It appeared to be only half a mile or so from the trail. It proved more distant—a common illusion in the crystal atmosphere of these upland regions.

A curiously-formed ridge—a *couteau des prairies*, on a small scale—traversed the plain from east to west. A thicket of cactus covered part of its summit. Towards this thicket I directed myself.

I dismounted at the bottom of the slope, and leading my horse silently up among the cacti plants, tied him to one of their branches. I then crept cautiously through the thorny leaves towards the point where I fancied I had seen the game. To my joy, not one antelope, but a brace of those beautiful animals, was quietly grazing beyond; but, alas! too far off for the carry of my rifle. They were fully three hundred yards distant, upon a smooth, grassy slope. There was not even a sage bush to cover me, should I attempt to "approach" them. What was to be done?

I lay for several minutes, thinking over the different tricks known in hunter-craft for taking the antelope. Should I imitate their call? Should I hoist my handkerchief, and try to lure them up? I saw that they were too shy; for, at short intervals, they threw up their graceful heads, and looked inquiringly around them. I remembered the red blanket on my saddle. I could display this upon the cactus bushes—perhaps it would attract them.

I had no alternative; and was turning to go back for the blanket, when, all at once, my eye rested on a clay-coloured line running across the prairie, beyond where the animals were feeding. It was a break in the surface of the plain—a buffalo road—or the channel of an *arroyo*—in either case the very cover I wanted—for the animals were not a hundred yards from it; and were getting still nearer to it as they fed.

Creeping back out of the thicket, I ran along the side of the slope toward a point, where I had noticed that the ridge was depressed to the prairie level. Here, to my surprise, I found myself on the banks of a broad arroyo, whose water, clear and shallow—ran slowly over a bed of sand and gypsum.

The banks were low—not over three feet above the surface of the water—except where the ridge impinged upon the stream. Here there was a high bluff; and, hurrying around its base, I entered the channel, and commenced wading upward.

As I had anticipated, I soon came to a bend, where the stream, after running parallel to the ridge, swept round and *canoned* through it. At this place I stopped, and looked cautiously over the bank. The antelopes had approached within less than rifle-range of the arroyo; but they were yet far above my position. They were still quietly feeding and unconscious of danger. I again bent down, and waded on.

It was a difficult task proceeding in this way. The bed of the creek was soft and yielding, and I was compelled to tread slowly and silently, lest I should alarm the game; but I was cheered in my exertions by the prospect of fresh venison for my supper.

After a weary drag of several hundred yards, I came opposite to a small clump of wormwood bushes, growing out of the bank. "I may be high enough," thought I; "these will serve for cover."

I raised my body gradually, until I could see through the leaves. I was in the right spot.

I brought my rifle to a level; sighted for the heart of the buck; and fired. The animal leaped from the ground; and fell back lifeless.

I was about to rush forward and secure my prize, when I observed the doe—instead of running off, as I had expected—go up to her fallen partner, and press her tapering nose to his body. She was not more than twenty yards from me; and I could plainly see that her look was one of inquiry and bewilderment! All at once, she seemed to comprehend the fatal truth; and, throwing back her head, commenced uttering the most piteous cries—at the same time running in circles around the body!

I stood wavering between two minds. My first impulse had been to reload, and kill the doe; but her plaintive voice entered my heart, disarming me of all hostile intentions. Had I dreamt of witnessing this painful spectacle, I should not have left the trail. But the mischief was now done. "I have worse than killed her," thought I; "it will be better to despatch her at once."

Actuated by these principles of a common, but to her fatal, humanity, I rested the butt of my rifle, and reloaded. With a faltering hand, I again levelled the piece, and fired.

My nerves were steady enough to do the work. When the smoke floated aside, I could see the little creature bleeding upon the grass—her head resting against the body of her murdered mate!

I shouldered my rifle; and was about to move forward, when, to my astonishment, I found that I was caught by the feet! I was held firmly, as if my legs had been screwed in a vice!

I made an effort to extricate myself—another, more violent, and equally unsuccessful—and, with a third, I lost my balance, and fell back upon the water!

Half suffocated, I regained my upright position; but only to find that I was held as fast as ever!

Again I struggled to free my limbs. I could neither move them backward nor forward—to the right nor the left; and I became sensible that I was gradually going down. Then the fearful truth flashed upon me, *I was sinking in a quicksand!*

A feeling of horror came over me. I renewed my efforts with the energy of desperation. I leaned to one side, then to the other, almost wrenching my knees from their sockets. My feet remained fast as ever. I could not move them an inch!

The soft, clingy sand already overtopped my horse-skin boots, wedging them around my ankles, so that I was unable to draw them off; and I could feel that I was still sinking, slowly but surely, as though some subterranean monster were leisurely dragging me down! This very thought caused me a fresh thrill of horror; and I called aloud for help! To whom? There was no one within miles of me—no living thing. Yes! the neigh of my horse answered me from the hill, mocking my despair!

I bent forward, as well as my constrained position would permit; and, with frenzied fingers, commenced tearing up the sand. I could barely reach the surface; and the little hollow I was able to make, filled up almost as soon as it had been formed!

A thought occurred to me. My rifle might support me, placed horizontally. I looked around for it. It was not to be seen. It had sunk beneath the sand!

Could I throw my body flat, and prevent myself from sinking deeper? No. The water was two feet in depth. I should drown at once!

This last hope left me as soon as formed. I could think of no plan to save myself. I could make no further effort. A strange stupor seized upon me. My very thoughts became paralyzed. I knew that I was going mad. For a moment *I was mad!*

After an interval my senses returned. I made an effort to rouse my mind from its paralysis, in order that I might meet death—which I now believed to be certain—as a man should.

I stood erect. My eyes had sunk to the prairie level, and rested upon the still bleeding victims of my cruelty. My heart smote me at the sight. Was I suffering a retribution of God?

With humble and penitent thoughts I turned my face to heaven, almost dreading that some sign of omnipotent anger would scowl upon me from above. But no. The sun was shining as bright as ever; and the blue canopy of the world was without a cloud.

I gazed upward, and prayed with an earnestness known only to the hearts of men in positions of peril like mine.

As I continued to look up, an object attracted my attention. Against the sky, I distinguished the outlines of a large, dark bird. I knew it to be the obscene bird of the plains—the buzzard-vulture. Whence had it come? Who knows? Far beyond the reach of human eye, it had seen or scented the slaughtered antelopes; and, on broad, silent wing, was now descending to the feast of death.

Presently another, and another, and many others, mottled the blue field of the heavens, curving and wheeling silently earthward. Then the foremost swooped down upon the bank; and, after gazing around for a moment, flapped off towards its prey.

In a few seconds the prairie was black with filthy birds, who clambered over the dead antelopes, and beat their wings against each other, while they tore out the eyes of the quarry with their fetid beaks.

And now came gaunt wolves—sneaking and hungry—stealing out of the cactus thicket, and loping, coward-like, over the green swells of the prairie. These, after a battle, drove away the vultures, and tore up the prey—all the while growling and snapping vengefully at each other.



Instead of going off with a start, the intelligent animal stepped away slowly, as though he understood my situation! The lariat tightened—I felt my body moving, and the next moment experienced a wild delight—a feeling I cannot describe—as I found myself dragged out of the sand!

“Thank heaven! I shall at least be saved from this!”

I was soon relieved from the sight. My eyes had sunk below the level of the bank. I had looked my last on the fair, green earth. I could now see only the clayey walls that contained the river, and the water that ran unheeding past me.

Once more I fixed my gaze upon the sky, and, with prayerful heart, endeavoured to resign myself to my fate.

In spite of my endeavours to be calm, the memories of earthly pleasures, and friends, and home came over me—causing me at intervals to break into wild paroxysms, and make fresh, though fruitless struggles.

Again I was attracted by the neighing of my horse.

A thought entered my mind, filling me with fresh hopes. “Perhaps my horse”——

I lost not a moment. I raised my voice to its highest pitch, and called the animal by name. I knew that he would come at my call. I had tied him but slightly. The cactus limb would snap off. I called again, repeating words that were well known to him. I listened with a bounding heart. For a moment there was silence. Then I heard the quick sounds of his hoof, as though the animal was rearing and struggling to free himself. Then I could distinguish the stroke of his heels, in a measured and regular gallop!

Nearer came the sounds—nearer and clearer, until the gallant brute bounded out on the bank above me. There he halted, and flinging back his tossed mane, uttered a shrill neigh. He was bewildered, and looked upon every side, snorting loudly!

I knew that having once seen me, he would not stop until he had pressed his nose against my cheek—for this was his usual custom. Holding out my hands, I again uttered the magic words.

Now looking downward, he perceived me; and, stretching himself, sprang out into the channel. The next moment I held him by the bridle!

There was no time to be lost. I was still going down; and my armpits were fast nearing the surface of the quicksand.

I caught the lariat, and passing it under the saddle-girths, fastened it in a tight, firm knot. I then looped the trailing end, making it secure around my body. I had left enough of the rope between the bit-ring and the girths, to enable me to check and guide the animal—in case the drag upon my body should be too painful.

All this while the dumb brute seemed to comprehend what I was about. He knew, too, the nature of the ground on which he stood; for during the operation, he kept lifting his feet alternately to prevent himself from sinking!

My arrangements were at length completed; and with a feeling of terrible anxiety, I gave my horse the signal to move forward. Instead of going off with a start, the intelligent animal stepped away slowly, as though he understood my situation! The lariat

tightened—I felt my body moving, and the next moment experienced a wild delight—a feeling I cannot describe—as I found myself dragged out of the sand!

I sprang to my feet with a shout of joy. I rushed up to my steed; and, throwing my arms around his neck, kissed him with as much delight as I would have kissed a beautiful girl. He answered my embrace with a low whimper, that told me I was understood!

I looked for my rifle. Fortunately, it had not sunk deeply, and I soon found it. My boots were behind me, but I stayed not to look for them—being smitten with a wholesome dread of the place where I had left them.

I was not long in retreating from the arroyo; and mounting, I galloped back to the trail.

It was sundown before I reached camp, where I was met by the inquiries of my wondering companions. “Did you come across the ‘goats?’” “Where’s your boots?” “Whither have you been, hunting or fishing?”

I answered all these questions by relating my adventures; and, for that night, I was again the hero of the camp-fire.

CHAPTER VI.

SANTA FÉ.

AFTER a week's climbing through the Rocky Mountains, we descended into the valley of Del Norte; and arrived at the capital of New Mexico—the far-famed Santa Fé. Next day the caravan itself came in—for we had lost time on the southern route; and the wagons, travelling by the Raton Pass, had made a good journey of it.

We had no difficulty about their entrance into the country, with the proviso that we paid five hundred dollars of *Alcavala* tax, upon each wagon. This was a greater extortion than usual; but the traders were compelled to accept the impost.

Santa Fé is the entrepôt of the province, and the chief seat of its trade. On reaching it, we halted, “camping” without the walls.

St. Vrain, several other *propriétaires*, and myself, took up our quarters at the Fonda; where we endeavored—by means of the sparkling vintage of El Paso—to make ourselves oblivious of the hardships we had endured in the passage of the plains.

The night of our arrival was given to feasting and making merry.

Next morning I was awakened by the voice of my man Godé—who appeared to be in high spirits—singing a snatch of a Canadian boat-song.

“Ah, monsieur!” cried he, on seeing me awake, “to-night—adjourdhui—une grand fonction—one bal—vat le dam Mexicaine he call fandango. Tre bien, monsieur. You vill sure have grand plaisir to see un fandango Mexicaine?”

“Not I, Godé; my countrymen are not so fond of dancing as yours.”

"C'est vrai, monsieur; but von fandango is tres curieux. You sall see ver many sort of de pas. Bolero, et valse, wis de Coona, and ver many more pas, all mix up in von puchero. Allons! monsieur, you vill see ver many pretty girl, avec les yeux tre noir, and ver short—ah, pe Gar! ver short—vat you call em in Americaine?"

"I do not know what you allude to."

"Cela! Zis, monsieur," holding out the skirt of his hunting-shirt. "Par Dieu! now I have him—petticoes, ver short petticoes. Ah, pe Gar! you sall see vat you sall see en un fandang Mexicaine.

"Las ninas de Durango
Conmigo bailandas,
Al cielo saltandas,
En el fandango—en el fan-dang—o."

"Ha! here comes Monsieur St. Vrain. Ecoutez! He nevare not go to fandango. Sacre! how monsieur dance! like un maitre de ballet. Mais he be de sangre—blood Français. Ecoutez!

"Al cielo saltandas,
En el fandango—en el fan-dang"—

"Ha! Godé!"

"Monsieur?"

"Trot over to the *Cantina*, and beg, borrow, buy, or steal a bottle of the best Paso."

"Sall I try steal 'im, Monsieur St. Vrain?" inquired Godé, with a knowing grin.

"No, you old Canadian thief! pay for it. There's the money. Best Paso, do you hear? cool and sparkling. Now, Vaya! Boz jour, my bold rider of buffalo bulls! Still abed, I see."

"My head aches as if it would split."

"Ha, ha, ha! so does mine; but Godé's gone for medicine. Hair of the dog good for the bite; come, jump up!"

"Wait till I get a dose of your medicine."

"True; you'll feel better then. I say—city life don't agree with us, eh?"

"You call this a city, do you?"

"Ay, so it is styled in these parts—*la ciudad de Santa Fé*—the famous city of Santa Fé—the capital of Nuevo Mexico—the metropolis of all prairiedom—the paradise of traders, trappers, and thieves!"

"And this is the progress of 300 years! Why these people have hardly passed the first stages of civilization?"

"Rather say they are passing the last stages of it. Here in this far oasis, you will find painting, poetry, dancing, theatres, and music—fêtes and fireworks, with all the little amorous arts that characterize a nation's decline. You will meet with numerous Don Quixotes—*soi-disant* knights-errant—Romeos without the heart, and ruffians without the courage. You will meet with

many things, before you encounter either virtue or honesty. Hola! muchacho!"

"Que es, señor?"

"Hay café?"

"Si, señor."

"Bring us a coup-de tazas then—doz tazas, do you hear? and quick—*aprisa! aprisa!*"

"Si, señor."

"Ha! here comes le voyageur Canadienne. So, old Nor-west! you've brought the wine?"

"Vin delicieuse, Monsieur St. Vrain! equal to ze vintage Français."

"He is right, Haller—Tsap—tsap—delicious you *may* say, good Godé. Tsap—tsap. Come, drink! It'll make you feel as strong as a buffalo. See! it seethes like a soda-spring! like *Fontaine-que-bouille*—eh, Godé?"

"Qui, monsieur; ver like *Fontaine-que-bouille*. Pe Gar, oui."

"Drink, man, drink! don't fear it—it's the pure juice. Smell the flavour—taste the bouquet. Lord! what wine the Yankees will one day squeeze out of these New-Mexican grapes!"

"Why? do you think the Yankees have an eye to this quarter?"

"Think! I know it; and why not? What use are these minikins in creation? Only to cumber the earth. Well, mozo? you have brought the coffee?"

"Ya está, señor."

"Here! try some of this—it will help to set you on your feet. They *can* make coffee, and no mistake. It takes a Spaniard to do that."

"What is this fandango Godé has been telling me about?"

"Ah! true. We are to have a famous one to-night. You'll go, of course?"

"Out of curiosity."

"Very well—you will have your curiosity gratified. The blustering old grampus of a governor is to honour the ball with his presence; and it is said his pretty senora: that I don't believe."

"Why not?"

"He's too much afraid lest one of these wild Americanos may whip her off on the cantle of his saddle. Such things have been done, in this very valley. By St. Mary! she *is* good-looking," continued St. Vrain, in a half soliloquy, "and I know a man—the cursed old tyrant! only think of it!"

"Of what?"

"The way he has bled us. Five hundred dollars a wagon, and a hundred of them at that—in all 50,000 dollars!"

"But will he pocket all this? will not the government——?"

"Government! no, every cent of it. He is the government here; and, with the help of this instalment, he will rule these miserable wretches with an iron rod. Poor devils!"

"And yet they hate him, do they not?"

"Him and his. God knows they have reason."

"It is strange they do not rebel?"

"They have, at times; but what can the poor devils do? Like all true tyrants, he has divided them; and makes them spend their heart's hatred on one another."

"But he seems not to have a very large army; no body-guard"—

"Body-guard!" cried St. Vrain, interrupting me, "look out! there's his body-guard!"

"*Indios bravos! les Navajoes!*" exclaimed Godé, at the same instant.

I looked forth into the street. Half-a-dozen tall savages, wrapped in striped *serapés*, were passing. Their wild, hungry looks and slow, proud walk at once distinguished them from the *Indios manzos*—the water-drawing, wood-hewing Pueblos

"Are they Navajoes?" I asked.

"Oui, Monsieur! oui!" replied Godé, apparently with some excitement. "Sacré Dieu! Navajoes—tre dam Navajoes!"

"There's no mistaking *them*," added St. Vrain.

"But the Navajoes are the notorious enemies of the New Mexicans! How come they to be here?—Prisoners?"

"Do they look like prisoners?"

They certainly showed no signs of captivity in either look or gesture. They strode proudly up the street—occasionally glancing at the passers, with an air of savage and lordly contempt.

"Why then are they here? Their country lies far to the west?"

"That is one of the secrets of Nuevo Mexico, about which I will enlighten you some other time. They are now protected by a treaty of peace—which is only binding upon *them*, so long as it may suit their convenience to recognise it. At present, they are as free here as you or I—indeed, more so, when it comes to that. I wouldn't wonder if we were to meet them at the fandango to-night."

"I have heard that the Navajoes are cannibals?"

"It is true. Look at them this minute! See how they gloat upon that chubby little fellow, who seems instinctively to fear them. Lucky for the urchin that it's broad daylight; or he might get chucked under one of those striped blankets."

"Are you in earnest, St. Vrain?"

"By my word, I am not jesting. If I mistake not, Godé's experience will confirm what I have said. Eh, voyageur?"

"C'est vrai, monsieur. I vas prisoniere in le nation—not Navagh, but le dam Apaché—moch the same—pour tree mons. I have les sauvages seen manger—eat—one—deux—tree enfants rôtis, like hump rib of de buffle. C'est vrai, messieurs, c'est vrai."

"It is quite true—both Apachés and Navajoes carry off children from the valley, here, in their grand forays: and it is said, by those who should know, that most of them are used in that way. Whether as a sacrifice to the fiery god Quetzalcoatl, or whether

from a fondness for human flesh, no one has yet been able to determine. In fact, with all their propinquity to this place, there is little known about them. Few, who have visited their towns, have had Godé's luck to get away again. No man of these parts ever ventures across the western sierras."

"And how came you, Monsieur Godé, to save your scalp?"

"Pourquoi, monsieur, je n'ai pas. I not haves scalp-lock—vat de trappare Yankee call 'har,'—mon scalp-lock is fabrique of von barbiere de Saint Luis. Voila! monsieur."

So saying, the Canadian lifted his cap; and along with it, what I had, up to this time, looked upon as a beautiful curling head of hair; but which now proved to be only a wig!

"Now, messieurs!" cried he in good humour, "how les sauvages my scalp take? Le dam Indienne no have cash-hold. Sacr-r-re!"

St. Vrain and I were unable to restrain our laughter at the altered and comical appearance of the Canadian.

"Come, Godé! the least you can do after that is to take a drink. Here, help yourself!"

"Tre oblige, Monsieur St. Vrain. Je vous merci." And the ever-thirsty voyageur quaffed off the nectar of El Paso, like so much fresh milk.

"Come, Haller! We must to the wagons. Business first, then pleasure, such as we may find here among these brick-stacks. But we'll have some fun in Chihuahua."

"And you think we shall go there?"

"Certainly. They do not want the fourth part of our stuff here. We must carry it on to the head market. To the camp! Allons!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE FANDANGO.

IN the evening I sat in my room waiting for St. Vrain. His voice reached me from without—

“Las ninas de Durango,
Conmigo bailandas,
Al cielo,——Ha!

Are you ready, my bold rider?”

“Not quite. Sit down a minute, and wait.”

“Hurry, then—the dancing’s begun. I have just come that way. What! that your ball-dress? Ha-ha-ha!” screamed St. Vrain, seeing me unpack a blue coat and a pair of dark pantaloons in a tolerable state of preservation.

“Why, yes,” replied I, looking up; “what fault do you find? but is that *your* ball-dress?”

No change had taken place in the ordinary raiment of my friend. The fringed hunting-shirt and leggins, the belt, the bowie, and the pistols were all before me!

“Yes, my dandy; this *is* my ball-dress—it aint any thing shorter; and if you’ll take my advice, you’ll wear what you have got on your back. How will your long-tailed blue look, with a broad belt and bowie strapped round the skirts? Ha-ha-ha!”

“But why take either belt or bowie? you are surely not going into a ball-room with your pistols in that fashion?”

“And how else should I carry them? in my hands?”

“Leave them here.”

“Ha! ha! that would be a green trick. No, no. Once bit, twice shy. You don’t catch this coon going into any fandango in Santa Fé without the six-shooters. Come! keep on that shirt—

let your leggins sweat where they are; and buckle this about you. That's the *costume du bal* in these parts."

"If you assure me that my dress will be *comme il faut*, I'm agreed."

"It *won't* be with the long-tailed blue, I promise you."

The long-tailed blue was restored forthwith to its nook in my portmanteau.

St. Vrain was right. On arriving at the room, a large *sala* in the neighbourhood of the Plaza, we found it filled with hunters, trappers, traders, and teamsters, all swaggering about in their usual mountain "rig." Mixed among them, were some two or three scores of the "natives," with an equal number of *senoritas*, all of whom, by their style of dress, I recognised as "poblanas," or persons of the lower class—the only class, in fact, to be met with in Santa Fé!

As we entered, most of the men had thrown aside their serapes for the dance; and appeared in all the finery of embroidered velvet, stamped leather, and shining "castletops." The women looked not less picturesque, in their bright "naguas," snowy chemisettes, and small satin slippers. Some of them flounced it in polka jackets; for even to that remote region the famous dance had found its way! "Have you heard of the electric telegraph?" "No, *senor*." "Can you tell me what a railroad is?" "Quien sabe?" "La Polka?" "Ah! *senor*, la polka, la polka, cosa buenita, tan gracioso! *vaya!*"

The ball-room was a large oblong *sala*, with a "banquette" running all around it. Upon this the dancers seated themselves, drew out their husk cigarettes, chatted, and smoked during the intervals of the dance. In one corner, half-a-dozen sons of Orpheus twanged away upon harp, guitar, and bandolon; occasionally helping out the music with a shrill half-Indian chant. In another angle of the apartment, *puros* and "Taos" whisky were dealt out to the thirsty mountaineers, who made the *sala* ring with their wild ejaculations.

There were scenes like the following:

"Hyar, my little *mochacha!* vamos, vamos, ter dance! mucho bueno? Mucho bueno? Will ye?"

This is from a great rough fellow of six feet and over, addressed to a trim little *poblana*.

"Mucho bueno, *senor Americano!*" replies the lady.

"Hooraw for you! Come along! let's lieker fust! You're the gal for my beaver. What'll yer drink? Agwardent, or vino?"

"Copitita de vino, *senor*." (A small glass of wine, sir.)

"Hyar, yer darned greaser! Set out yer vino in a squll's jump! Now, my little 'un, hyar's luck, and a good husband!"

"Gracias, *senor Americano!*"

"What! you understand that? You *intende*, do yer?"

"Si, *senor!*"

"Hooraw, then! Look hyar, little 'un—kin yer go the bar-dance?"

“*No entiende.*”

“Yer don’t understan’ it! Hyar it is—this away;” and the clumsy hunter began to show off before his partner, in an imitation of the grizzly bear.

“Hilloa, Bill!” cries a comrade, “yer’ll be trapped if yer don’t look sharp. How’s your kidneys, hoss?”

“I’m dog-gone, Jim, if I don’t feel querey about hyar,” replies the hunter, spreading his great paw over the region of the heart.

“Don’t be skeert, man—it’s a nice gal, anyways.”

“Nice! Draw a bead on them eyes, if yer kin; and jest squint down at them ankles!”

“Good sights—heap o’ quarter—clean shanks.”

“I wonder what the old chap’ll take for her. I’m most froze for a squaw. Ha’n’t had nery one since I tuck back that Crow woman on the Yeller-stone.”

“Wah, ran! yer aint among Injuns. Get the gal’s consent, if yer kin, and she won’t cost yer as much as a plug o’ bacca.”

“Hooray for old Missoura!” shouts a teamster.

“Come, boys! Let’s show these yer greasers a Virginny breakdown. ‘Clar the kitchen, old folks, young folks.’”

“Go it hoe and toe! ‘Ole Virginny neber tire!”

“Viva el gobernador! Viva Armijo! Viva! viva!”

An arrival at this moment caused a sensation in the room. A stout, fat, priest-like man entered, accompanied by several others. It was the governor and his suite, with a number of well-dressed citizens, who were no doubt the *élite* of New-Mexican society. Some of the new-comers were *militaires*, dressed in gaudy and foolish-looking uniforms, that were soon seen spinning around the room in the mazes of the waltz.

“Where is the Senora Armijo?” I whispered to St. Vrain.

“I told you as much. She—she won’t be out. Stay here—I am going for a short while. Help yourself to a partner, and see some fun. I will be back presently. *Au revoir!*”

Without any further explanation, St. Vrain squeezed himself through the crowd, and disappeared.

I had been seated on the banquette, since entering the sala—St. Vrain beside me—in a retired corner of the room. A man of peculiar appearance occupied the seat next to St. Vrain, but farther into the shadow of a piece of furniture. I had noticed this man as we entered; and noticed too that St. Vrain spoke to him; but I was not introduced; and the interposition of my friend prevented me from making any further observation of him, until the latter had retired. We were now side by side; and I commenced a sort of angular reconnoissance of a face and figure that had somewhat strangely arrested my attention. He was not an American—that was evident from his dress, and yet the face was not Mexican. Its outlines were too bold for a Spanish face, though the complexion, from tan and exposure, was brown and swarth. His face was clean shaven, except the chin, that carried a pointed,

darkish beard. The eye, if I saw it aright under the shadow of a slouched brim, was blue and mild; the hair brown and wavy, with here and there a strand of silver. These were not Spanish characteristics, much less Hispano-American; and I should have at once placed my neighbour elsewhere, but that his dress puzzled me. It was purely a Mexican costume, and consisted of a purple *manga*, with dark velvet embroidery around the vent and along the borders. As this garment covered the greater part of his person, I could only see that underneath was a pair of green velveteen calzoneros, with yellow buttons, and snow-white calzoncillos puffing out along the seams. The bottoms of the calzoneros were trimmed with stamped black leather; and under these were yellow boots, with a heavy steel spur upon the heel of each. The broad peaked strap that confined the spur, passing over the foot, gave to it that peculiar *contour* that we observe in the pictures of armed knights of the olden time. He wore a black broad-brimmed sombrero, girdled by a thick band of gold bullion. A pair of tags of the same material stuck out from the sides—the fashion of the country.

The man kept his sombrero slouched toward the light, as I thought or suspected, for the concealment of his face. And yet it was not an ill-favoured one. On the contrary, it was open and pleasing—no doubt had been handsome—before time, and whatever caused its melancholy expression, had lined and clouded it. It was this expression that had struck me on first seeing the man.

While I was making these observations—eyeing him crosswise all the while—I discovered that he was eyeing *me* in a similar manner; and with an interest apparently equal to my own. This caused us to face round to each other; when the stranger drew from under his *manga* a small beaded cigarro; and, gracefully holding it out to me, said—

“*Quiere a fumar caballero?*” (Would you smoke, sir?)

“Thank you—yes,” I replied in Spanish; at the same time taking a cigar from the case.

We had hardly lit our cigarettes, when the man again turned to me, with the unexpected question—

“Will you sell your horse?”

“No.”

“Not for a good price?”

“Not for any price.”

“I would give you five hundred dollars for him.”

“I would not part with him for twice the amount.”

“I will give twice the amount.”

“I have become attached to him—money is no object.”

“I am sorry to hear it—I *have come two hundred miles to buy that horse.*”

I looked at my new acquaintance with astonishment, involuntarily repeating his last words.

“You must have followed us from the Arkansas, then?”

"No, I came from the Rio Abajo."

"The Rio Abajo! You mean from down the Del Norte?"

"Yes."

"Then, my dear sir, it is a mistake. You think you are talking to somebody else, and bidding for some other horse."

"Oh, no! He is yours. A black stallion with red nose, and long full tail—half-bred Arabian? There is a small mark over the left eye."

This was certainly the description of Moro; and I began to feel a sort of superstitious awe in regard to my mysterious neighbour.

"True," replied I, "that is all correct; but I bought that stallion many months ago from a Louisiana planter. If you have just arrived from two hundred miles down the Rio Grande, how, may I ask, could you have known any thing about me or my horse?"

"Dispensadme, caballero! I did not mean that. I came from below to meet the caravan, for the purpose of buying an *American* horse. Yours is the only one in the cavallada I would buy; and, it seems, the only one that is not for sale!"

"I am sorry for that; but I have tested the qualities of this animal. We have become friends. No common motive would induce me to part with him."

"Ah, senor! it is not a *common* motive that makes me so eager to purchase him. If you knew *that*, perhaps"—he hesitated a moment—"but no—no—no," and after muttering some half-coherent words, among which I could recognise the "*Buenas noches, caballero!*" the stranger rose up with the same mysterious air that had all along characterized him; and left me. I could hear the tinkling of the small bell upon the rowels of his spurs, as he slowly warped himself through the gay crowd and disappeared into the night.

The vacated seat was soon occupied by a dusky "manola," whose bright *nagua*, embroidered chemisette, brown ankles, and small blue slippers drew my attention. This was all I could see of her, except the occasional flash of a very black eye through the loophole of the "*rebozo tapado*." By degrees, the *rebozo* became more generous—the loophole expanded—and the outlines of a very pretty and very malicious little face were displayed before me. The end of the scarf was adroitly removed from the left shoulder; and a nude plump arm, ending in a bunch of small jewelled fingers, hung carelessly down.

I am tolerably bashful; but, at the sight of this tempting partner, I could "hold in" no longer; and bending towards her, I said in my best Spanish, "Do me the favour, miss, to waltz with me?"

The wicked little manola first held down her head, and blushed. Then raising the long fringes of her eyes, looked up again; and, with a voice as sweet as that of a canary-bird, replied—

“Con gusto, señor.” (With pleasure, sir.)

“Nos vamos!” cried I, elated with my triumph; and, pairing off with my brilliant partner, we were soon whirling about in the “mazy.”

We returned to our seats again; and after refreshing with a glass of “Albuquerque,” a sponge-cake, and a “husk” cigarette, again “took the floor.” This pleasurable programme we repeated some half-dozen times, varying the dance only from waltz to polka—for my manola danced the polka as if she had been a born Bohemian.

On one of my fingers was a fifty-dollar diamond; which my partner seemed to think was “muy buenito.” As her igneous eyes softened my heart, and the champagne was producing a similar effect upon my head, I began to speculate on the propriety of transferring the diamond from the smallest of my fingers to the largest of hers; which it would, no doubt, have fitted exactly. All at once, I became conscious of being under the surveillance of a large and very fierce-looking *leperó*—a regular *pelado*—who followed us with his eyes, and sometimes *in persona*, to every part of the room. The expression of his swarthy face was a mixture of jealousy and vengeance—which my partner noticed, but, as I thought, took no pains to soften down.

“Who is he?” I whispered, as the man swung past us in his checkered serapé.

“Esta mi marido, señor.” (It is my husband, sir,) was the cool reply!

I pushed the ring close up to the root of my finger, shutting my hand upon it as tight as a vice.

“Vamos a tomar otra copita!” (Let us take another glass of wine!) said I, resolving to bid my pretty “poblana,” as soon as possible, a good-night.

The Taos whisky had by this time produced its effect upon the dancers. The trappers and teamsters had become noisy and riotous. The leperos—who now half-filled the room—stimulated by wine, jealousy, old hates, and the dance, began to look more savage and sulky. The fringed hunting-shirts and brown homespun frocks found favour with the dark-eyed “majas” of Mexico—partly out of a respect for—and a fear of—courage, which is often at the bottom of a love like theirs.

Although the trading caravans supplied almost all the commerce of Santa Fé, and it was clearly the interest of its inhabitants to be on good terms with the traders, the two races—Anglo-American and Hispano-Indian—hated each other thoroughly; and that hate was now displaying itself, on one side, in bullying contempt—on the other, in muttered “carajos” and fierce looks of vengeance.

I was still chatting with my lively partner. We were seated on the banquette, where I had introduced myself. On looking casually up, a bright object met my eyes. It appeared to be a

naked knife in the hands of "su marido," who was just then lowering over us like the shadow of an evil spirit. I was favoured with only a slight glimpse of this dangerous meteor; and had made up my mind to "ware steel," when some one plucked me by the sleeve; and turning, I beheld my quondam acquaintance of the purple manga.

"Dispensadme, senor," said he, nodding graciously, "I have just learned that the caravan is going on to Chihuahua."

"True—there is no market here for our goods."

"You go on then, of course?"

"Certainly—I must."

"Will you return this way, senor?"

"It's very likely—I have no other intention at present."

"Perhaps—*then*, you might be willing to part with your horse?—You will find many as good in the great valley of the Mississippi."

"Neither is likely."

"But, senor, should you be so inclined, will you promise me the refusal of him?"

"Oh! that I will promise you with all my heart."

Our conversation was here interrupted by a huge, gaunt, half-drunken Missourian, who, trampling rudely upon the stranger's toes, vociferated—

"Ye—up, old greaser! and gi' me a char."

"Y porque?" (and why?) demanded the Mexican, drawing in his feet, and looking up with astonished indignation.

"Porky be d—d! I'm tired jumpin—I want a seat, that's it, old hoss."

There was something so bullying and brutal in the conduct of this man, that I felt called upon to interfere.

"Come!" said I, addressing him, "you have no right to deprive this gentleman of his seat—much less in such a fashion."

"Eh, Mister? who the h—ll asked you to open yer head? Ye—up, I say!" and, at the word, he seized the Mexican by the corner of his manga, as if to drag him from his seat.

Before I had time to reply to this rude speech and gesture, the stranger leaped to his feet; and, with a well-planted blow, felled the bully upon the floor.

This seemed to act as a signal for bringing several other quarrels to a climax. There was a rush through all parts of the sala—drunken shouts mingled with yells of vengeance—knives glanced from their sheaths—women screamed—pistols flashed and cracked, filling the room with smoke and dust. The lights went out—fierce struggles could be heard in the darkness—the fall of heavy bodies amid groans and curses—and for five minutes these were the only sounds.

Having no cause to be particularly angry with anybody, I stood where I had risen, without using either knife or pistol—my frightened "maja" all the while holding me by the hand. A painful

sensation near my left shoulder caused me suddenly to drop my partner; and, with that unaccountable weakness consequent upon the reception of a wound, I felt myself staggering towards the banquette. Here I dropped into a sitting posture, and remained till the struggle was over—conscious, all the while, that a stream of blood was oozing down my back, and saturating my under garments.

I sat thus till the struggle had ended. A light was brought, and I could distinguish a number of men in hunting-shirts moving to and fro with violent gesticulations. Some of them were advocating the justice of the “spree,” as they termed it; while others, the more respectable of the traders, were denouncing it. The *leperos*, with the women, had all disappeared; and I could perceive that the Americans had carried the day. Several dark objects lay along the floor—they were bodies of men dead or dying! One was an American—the Missourian who had been the immediate cause of the fracas—the others were *pelados*. I could see nothing of my late acquaintance. My *fandanguera*, too—*con su marido*—had disappeared; and on glancing at my left hand, I came to the conclusion that so also had my diamond ring!

“St. Vrain! St. Vrain!” I called, seeing the figure of my friend enter at the door.

“Where are you, H., old boy? How is it with you? all right, eh?”

“Not quite, I fear.”

“Good God! what’s this? why, you’re stabbed in the *lumpy* ribs! Not bad, I hope. Off with your shirt, and let’s see.”

“First, let us to my room.”

“Come then, my dear boy, lean on me—so, so.”

The fandango was over.

CHAPTER VIII.

SEGUIN, THE SCALP-HUNTER.

I HAVE had the pleasure of being wounded in the field of battle. I say *pleasure*. Under certain circumstances, wounds are luxuries. You have been carried on a "stretcher" to some secure spot. An aide-de-camp drops from his sweating horse, and announces that "the enemy is in full flight:" thus relieving you from the apprehension of being transfixed by some moustached lancer—a friendly surgeon bends over you; and, after groping a while about your wound, tells you it is "only a scratch," and that it will be well in a week or two:—then come visions of glory—the glory of the Gazette:—present pains are forgotten in the contemplation of future triumphs—the congratulations of friends—the smiles, perchance, of one dearer than all. Consoled by such anticipations, you lie back on your rude couch, smiling at a bullet-hole through thigh, or the slash of a sabre across your arm.

I have had these emotions. How different were the feelings I experienced while smarting under wounds that came by the steel of the assassin!

My earliest anxiety was about the "depth" of my wound. Was it mortal? This is generally the first question a man puts to himself, after discovering that he has been shot or stabbed. A wounded man cannot always answer it either. One's life-blood may be spurting from the artery at each palpitation, while the actual pain felt is not worth the pricking of a pin.

On reaching the Fonda, I sank exhausted on my bed. St. Vrain

split my hunting-shirt from cape to skirt; and commenced examining my wound. I could not see my friend's face, as he stood behind me, and I waited with impatience.

"Is it deep?" I asked.

"Not deep as a draw-well, nor wide as a wagon-track," was the reply. "You're quite safe, old fellow; thank God, and not the man that handled that knife—for the fellow plainly intended to do for you. It is the cut of a Spanish knife, and a devilish gash it is. By the Lord! Haller, it was a close shave. One inch more, and the spine, my boy! But you're safe, I say. Here, Godé! that sponge?"

"*Sacré*," muttered Godé, with true Gallic aspirate, as he handed the wet rag.

I felt the cold application. Then a bunch of soft raw cotton—the best dressing it could have—was laid over the wound, and fastened by strips. The most skilful surgeon could have done no more.

"Close as a clam," added St. Vrain, as he fastened the last pin, and placed me in the easiest position. "But what started the row? and how came you to cut such a figure in it? I was out, thank God."

"Did you observe a strange-looking man——?"

"What! with the purple manga?"

"Yes."

"He sat beside us?"

"Yes."

"Ha! No wonder you say a strange-looking man—stranger than he looks too. I saw him, I know him, and perhaps not another in the room could say that—ay—there *was* another," continued St. Vrain, with a peculiar smile; "but what could have brought *him* there is that which puzzles me. Armijo could not have seen him—but—go on."

I related to St. Vrain the whole of my conversation with the stranger, and the incidents that had led to the breaking up of the fandango.

"It is odd—very odd. What the deuce could he want with your horse? Two hundred miles, and offers a thousand dollars!"

"*Enfant de Gârce, capitaine*," (Godé had called me captain ever since the ride upon the buffalo,) "if monsieur come two hundred mile, and vill pay un mille thousan dollar, pe Gar, he Moro like ver—ver moch. Un grand passion pour le cheval. Pourquoi—vy he no like him ver sheep? vy he no steal 'im?"

I started at the suggestion, and looked toward St. Vrain.

"Vith permiss of le capitaine, I vill le cheval caché," continued the Canadian, moving toward the door.

"You need not trouble yourself, old Nor-west, as far as that gentleman is concerned. He'll not steal your horse—though that's no reason why you should not fulfil your intention, and *cache* the animal. There are thieves enough in Santa Fé to steal the horses

of a whole regiment. You had better fasten him by the door here."

Godé, after devoting Santa Fé and its inhabitants to a much warmer climate than Canada, passed to the door, and disappeared.

"Who is he?" I asked, "this man about whom there seems to be so much that is mysterious?"

"Ah! if you knew. I will tell you some queer passages, by-and-by, but not to-night. You have no need of excitement. That is the famous Seguin—the Scalp-Hunter."

"The Scalp-Hunter!"

"Ay! you have heard of him, no doubt; at least you would, had you been much among the mountains."

"I have. The hellish ruffian—the wholesale butcher of innocent"—

A dark waif danced against the wall. It was the shadow of a man. I looked up. Seguin was before me!

St. Vrain, on seeing him enter, had turned away; and stood looking out of the window.

I was on the point of changing my tirade into the apostrophic form—and at the same time ordering the man out of my sight—when something in his look influenced me to remain silent. I could not tell whether he had heard, or understood to whom my abusive epithets had been applied; but there was nothing in his manner that betrayed his having done so. I observed only the same look that had at first attracted me—the same expression of deep melancholy.

Could this man be the hardened and heartless villain I had heard of? the author of so many atrocities?

"Sir," said he, seeing that I remained silent, "I deeply regret what has happened you. I was the involuntary cause of your mishap. Is your wound a severe one?"

"It is not," I replied, with a dryness of manner that seemed somewhat to discompose him.

"I am glad of that," he continued, after a pause. "I came to thank you for your generous interference. I leave Santa Fé in ten minutes. I must bid you farewell."

He held forth his hand. I muttered the word "farewell," but without offering to exchange the salutation. The stories of cruel atrocity, connected with the name of this man, came into my mind at the moment; and I felt a loathing for him. His arm remained in its outstretched position, while a strange expression began to steal over his countenance, as he saw that I hesitated.

"I cannot take your hand," I said at length.

"And why?" he asked, in a mild tone.

"Why! it is red—red; away, sir, away!"

He fixed his eyes upon me with a sorrowful look. There was not a spark of anger in them. He drew his hand within the folds of his manga; and, uttering a deep sigh, turned and walked slowly out of the room.

St. Vrain, who had wheeled round at the close of this scene, strode forward to the door, and stood looking after him. I could see the Mexican, from where I lay, as he crossed the quadrangular *patio*. He had shrugged himself closely in his *manga*; and was moving off in an attitude that betokened the deepest dejection. In a moment he was out of sight—having passed through the *saguan*, and into the street.

“There is something truly mysterious about that man. Tell me, St. Vrain”——

“Hush-sh! look yonder!” interrupted my friend, pointing through the open door.

I looked out into the moonlight. Three human forms were moving along the wall, toward the entrance of the *patio*. Their height, their peculiar attitudes, and the stealthy silence of their steps, convinced me they were Indians. The next moment they were lost under the dark shadows of the *saguan*.

“Who are they?” I inquired.

“Worse enemies to poor Seguin than you would be, if you knew him better. I pity him, if those hungry hawks overtake him in the dark. But no; he’s worth warning, and a hand to help him, if need be. He shall have it. Keep cool, Harry. I will be back in a jiffy.”

So saying, St. Vrain left me; and, the moment after, I could see his light form passing hastily out of the gate!

I lay, reflecting on the strangeness of the incidents that seemed to be occurring around me. I was not without some painful reflections. I had wounded the feelings of one who had not injured me, and for whom my friend evidently entertained a high respect. A shod hoof sounded upon the stones outside; it was Godé with my horse; and, the next moment, I heard him hammering the picket-pin into the pavement.

Shortly after, St. Vrain himself returned.

“Well,” I inquired, “what happened you?”

“Nothing much. That’s a weasel that never sleeps. He had mounted his horse before they came up with him; and was very soon out of their reach.”

“But may they not follow him on horseback?”

“That is not likely. He has comrades not far from here, I warrant you. Armijo—and it was he sent those villains on his track—has no force that dare follow *him* when he gets upon the wild hills. No fear for him, once he has cleared the houses.”

“But, my dear St. Vrain, tell me what you know of this singular man. I am wound up to a pitch of curiosity.”

“Not to-night, Harry; not to-night. I do not wish to cause you further excitement; besides I have reason to leave you now. To-morrow, then. Good-night! good-night!”

And so saying, my mercurial friend left me to Godé and a night of restlessness.

CHAPTER IX.

LEFT BEHIND.

ON the third day after the fandango, it is announced that the caravan will move onward to Chihuahua.

The day arrives, and I am unable to travel with it. My surgeon,—a wretched leech of a Mexican,—assures me that it will be certain death to attempt the journey. For want of any opposing evidence, I am constrained to believe him. I have no alternative, but to adopt the joyless resolve to remain in Santa Fé until the return of the traders.

Chafing on a feverish bed, I take leave of my late companions. We part with many regrets; but above all, I am pained at bidding adieu to St. Vrain, whose light-hearted companionship has been my solace through three days of suffering. He has proved my friend; and has undertaken to take charge of my wagons, and dispose of my goods in the market of Chihuahua.

“Do not fret, man,” says he, taking leave. “Kill time with the champagne of El Paso. We will be back in a squirrel’s jump; and trust me, I will bring you a mule-load of Mexican shiners. God bless you—good-bye!”

I can sit up in my bed; and, from the open window, see the white tilts of the wagons, as the train rolls over a neighbouring hill. I hear the cracking whips, and the deep-toned “wo-ha” of the teamsters—I see the traders mount and gallop after; and I turn upon my couch with a feeling of loneliness and desertion.

For days I lie tossing and fretting, despite the consolatory influ

ence of the champagne, and the rude but kindly attentions of my *voyageur valet*.

I rise at length—dress myself—and sit in my “*ventana*.” I have a good view of the plaza, and the adjacent streets, with their rows of brown *adobe* houses, and dusty ways between them.

I gaze, hour after hour, on what is passing without. The scene is not without novelty, as well as variety. Swarthy, ill-favoured faces appear behind the folds of dingy *rebozos*. Fierce glances lower under the slouch of broad *sombreros*. *Poblanos*, with short skirts and slippers on feet, pass my window; and groups of “tame” Indians,—*Pueblos*—crowd in from the neighbouring *rancherías*, belabouring their donkeys as they go. These bring baskets of fruit and vegetables. They squat down upon the dusty plaza, behind piles of prickly pears, or pyramids of tomatoes and *chilé*. The women—light-hearted hucksters—laugh and sing, and chatter continually. The *tortillera*, kneeling by her *metate*, bruises the boiled maize, claps it into thin cakes, flings it on the heated stone, and then cries, “*Tortillas! tortillas calientes!*” The *Cocinera* stirs the peppery stew of *chilé colorado*—lifts the red liquid in her wooden ladle, and invites her customers by the expressions, “*Chilé bueno! excelente!*” “*Carbon! carbon!*” cries the charcoal-burner. “*Agua! agua limpia!*” shouts the *aguadoré*. “*Pan fino—pan blanco!*” screams the baker; and other cries—from the venders of *atolé*, *hucos*, and *leché*,—are uttered in shrill, discordant voices. Such are the voices of a Mexican “plaza.”

They are at first interesting. They become monotonous,—then disagreeable: until at length I am tortured; and listen to them with a feverish excitement.

After a few days, I was able to walk,—and went out with my faithful *Godé*. We strolled through the town. It reminded me of an extensive brick-field, before the kilns have been set on fire.

We encountered the same brown *adobes* everywhere—the same villanous-looking *leperos* lounging at the corners—the same bare-legged, slippered wenchcs—the same strings of belaboured donkeys—the same shrill and detestable cries.

We passed by a ruinous-looking house in a remote quarter. Our ears were saluted by voices from within. We heard shouts of “*Mueran los Yankees! Abajo los Americanos!*” No doubt the *pelado*—to whom I was indebted for my wound—was among the ruffians who crowded into the windows; but I knew the lawlessness of the place too well to apply for justice.

We heard the same shouts in another street,—again in the plaza; and *Godé* and I re-entered the *Fonda*, with a conviction that our appearance in public might be attended with danger. We resolved therefore to keep within doors.

In all my life I never suffered ennui as when cooped up in this semi-barbarous town; and almost confined within the walls of its filthy *fonda*. I felt it the more that I had so lately enjoyed the company of such free, jovial spirits, and I could fancy them in

their bivouacs on the banks of the Del Norté, carousing, laughing, or listening to some wild mountain story.

Godé shared my feelings; and became as desponding as myself. The light humour of the voyageur disappeared. The song of the Canadian boatman was heard no longer; but, in its place, the "Sacre," the "Enfant de Garce," and the English "God-dam," were sputtered plentifully, and hurled at every thing Mexican. I resolved at length to put an end to our sufferings.

"This life will never do, Godé," said I, addressing my companion.

"Ah! monsieur, ne varez! ne varez it will do. Ah! ver doll. It is like von assemblée of le tam Quaker."

"I am determined to endure it no longer."

"But what can monsieur do? How, capitaine?"

"By leaving this accursed place; and that to-morrow."

"But is monsieur fort—strongs beaucoup strongs to ride?"

"I will risk it, Godé. If I break down, there are other towns on the river where we can halt. Anywhere better than here."

"C'est vrai, capitaine. Beautiful village down the river. Albuquerque—Tomé—ver many village. Mon Dieu!—all better. Santa Fé is one camp of dam thief. Ver good for us go, monsieur; ver good."

"Good or not, Godé, I am going. So make your preparations to-night, for I will leave in the morning before sunrise."

"Dieu merci! It will be von grand plaisir to make ready." And the Canadian ran from the room, snapping his fingers with delight.

I had made up my mind to leave Santa Fé at any rate. Should my strength, yet but half-restored, hold out, I would follow, and if possible, overtake the caravan. I knew it could make but short journeys over the deep sand roads of the Del Norté. Should I not succeed in coming up with it, I could halt in Albuquerque or El Paso, either of which would offer me a residence, at least as agreeable as the one I was leaving.

My surgeon endeavoured to dissuade me from setting out. He represented that I was in a most critical condition. My wound far from being cicatrized. He set forth, in most eloquent terms, the dangers of fever, of gangrene, of hemorrhage. He saw I was obstinate, and concluded his monitions by presenting his bill. It amounted to the modest sum of 100 dollars! It was an extortion. What could I do? I stormed and protested. The Mexican threatened me with the "governor's" justice. Godé swore in French, Spanish, English, and Indian. It was all to no purpose. I saw that the bill would have to be paid; and I paid it, though with indifferent grace.

The leech disappeared, and the landlord came next. He, like the former, made earnest entreaty to prevent me from setting forth. He offered a variety of reasons to detain me.

"Do not go; for your life, senor, do not."

"And why, good José?" I inquired.

"Oh, señor, los Indios bravos—los Navajoes! carrambo!"

"But I am not going into the Indian country. I travel down the river, through the towns of New Mexico."

"Ah! señor, the towns—no hay seguridad. No, no, there is safety nowhere from the Navajo. Hay novedades—news this very day. Polvidera, pobre Polvidera! It was attacked on Sunday last. On Sunday, señor, when they were all en la misa. Pues, señor, the robbers surrounded the church; and oh, Carrambo! they dragged out the poor people—men, women, and children! Pues, señor; they killed the men—and the women—Dios de mi alma!"

"Well, and the women?"

"Oh, señor, they are all gone—they were carried to the mountains by the savages. Pobres mugeres!"

"It is a sad story, truly; but the Indians, I understand, only make these forays at long intervals. I am not likely to meet with them now. At all events, José, I have made up my mind to run the risk."

"But, señor," continued José, lowering his voice to a confidential tone, "there are other ladrones besides the Indians—white ones—muchos—muchissimos! Ay, indeed, mi amo, white robbers—blancos—blancos y muy feos—carrai!"

And José closed his fingers as if clutching some imaginary object.

This appeal to my fears was in vain. I answered it by pointing to my revolvers and rifle; and to the well-filled belt of my henchman, Godé.

When the Mexican boniface saw that I was determined to rob him of all the guests he had in his house, he retired sullenly, and shortly after returned with *his* bill. Like that of the "medico," it was out of all proportion; but I could not help myself, and paid it.

By gray dawn I was in my saddle; and, followed by Godé and a couple of heavily-packed mules, I rode out of the ill-favoured town, and took the road for the "Rio Abajo."

CHAPTER X.

THE DEL NORTE.

For days we journey down the Del Norté. We pass through numerous villages, many of them types of Santa Fé. We cross the zequias and irrigating canals, and pass along fields of bright-green maize-plants. We see vineyards and grand haciendas. These appear richer and more prosperous, as we approach the southern part of the province—the Rio Abajo.

In the distance, both east and west, we descry dark mountains rolled up against the sky. These are the twin ranges of the Rocky Mountains. Long spurs trend towards the river, and in places appear to close up the valley. They add to the expression of many a beautiful landscape that opens before us as we move onward.

We see picturesque costumes in the villages and along the highways. Men dressed in the checkered serape or the striped blanket of the Navajoes; conical sombreros with broad brims; calzonereros of velveteen, with their rows of shining castle-tops, and fastened at the waist by the jaunty sash. We see mangas and tilmas, and men wearing the sandal as in Eastern lands. On the women we observe the graceful rebozo, the short nagua, and the embroidered chemisette.

We see rude implements of husbandry: the creaking carreta, with its block wheels; the primitive plough of the forking tree-branch, scarcely scoring the soil; the horn-yoked oxen; the goad; the clumsy hoe, in the hands of the peon serf.—these are all ob-

jects that are new and curious to our eyes, and that indicate the lowest order of agricultural knowledge.

Along the roads we meet numerous atajos, in charge of their arrieros. We observe the mules, small, smooth, light-limbed, and vicious. We glance at the heavy alparejas and bright worsted apishamores. We notice the tight, wiry mustangs, ridden by the arrieros; the high-peaked saddles and hair-bridles; the swarthy faces and pointed beards of the riders; the huge spurs, that tinkle at every step; the exclamations, "¡Hola! mula! mula! malraya! vaya!"—we notice all these; and they tell us we are journeying in the land of the Spano-American.

Under other circumstances, these objects would have interested me. At that time they appeared to me like the pictures of a panorama, or the changing scenes of a continuous dream. As such, have they left their impressions on my memory. I was under the incipient delirium of fever.

It was yet only incipient; nevertheless, it distorted the images around me, and rendered their impressions unnatural and wearisome. My wound began to pain me afresh; and the hot sun, and the dust, and the thirst, with the miserable accommodations of New-Mexican posadas, vexed me to an excess of endurance.

On the fifth day after leaving Santa Fé, we entered the wretched little "pueblo" of Parida. It was my intention to have remained there all night; but it proved a ruffian-sort of place, with meagre chances of comfort; and I moved on to Socorro. This is the last inhabited spot in New Mexico, as you approach the terrible desert—the Jornada del Muerte.

Godé had never made the journey; and at Parida I had obtained one thing that we stood in need of—a guide. He had volunteered; and as I learned that it would be no easy task to procure one at Socorro, I was fain to take him along. He was a coarse, shaggy-looking customer, and I did not at all like his appearance; but I found, on reaching Socorro, that what I had heard was correct. No guide could be hired on any terms—so great was their dread of the Jornada, and its occasional denizens, the Apachés.

Socorro was alive with Indian rumours—*novedades*. The Indians had fallen upon an atajo near the crossing of Fra Cristobal; and murdered the arrieros to a man. The village was full of consternation at the news. The people dreaded an attack, and thought me mad when I made known my intention of crossing the Jornada.

I began to fear they would frighten my guide from his engagement; but the fellow stood out stanchly, still expressing his willingness to accompany us.

Without the prospect of meeting the Apaché savages, I was but ill-prepared for the Jornada. The pain of my wound had increased, and I was fatigued, and burning with fever.

But the caravan had passed through Socorro only three days

before; and I was in hopes of overtaking my old companions before they could leave El Paso. This determined me to proceed in the morning, and I made arrangements for an early start.

Godé and I were awake before dawn. My attendant went out to summon the guide and saddle our animals. I remained in the house making preparations for a cup of coffee before starting. I was assisted by the landlord of the posada, who had arisen, and was strolling about in his serapé.

While thus engaged, I was startled by the voice of Godé calling from without, "Mon maitre! mon maitre! the dam rascal have him run vay!"

"What do you mean? Who has run away!"

"Oh, monsieur! le dam Mexicane, vith von mule, has rob, and run vay. Allons, monsieur, allons!"

I followed the Canadian to the stable with a feeling of anxiety. My horse—but no—thank Heaven, he was there! One of the mules, the macho, was gone. It was the one which the guide had ridden from Parida.

"Perhaps he is not off yet," I suggested. "He may still be in the town."

We sent and went in all directions to find him, but to no purpose. We were relieved at length from all doubts by the arrival of some early market-men, who had met such a man as our guide far up the river, and riding a mule at full gallop.

What should we do? Follow him to Parida! No; that would be a journey for nothing. I knew that he would not be fool enough to go that way. Even if he did, it would have been a fool's errand to seek for justice there: so I determined on leaving it over, until the return of the traders would enable me to find the thief, and demand his punishment from the authorities.

My regrets at the loss of my macho were not unmixed with a sort of gratitude to the fellow, when I laid my hand upon the nose of my whimpering charger. What hindered him from taking the horse instead of the mule? It is a question I have never been able to answer to this day. I can only account for the fellow's preference for the mule on the score of downright honesty, or the most perverse stupidity.

I made overtures for another guide. I applied to the boniface of Socorro, but without success. He knew no "mozo" who would undertake the journey.

"Los Apachés!—los Apachés!"

I appealed to the peons and loiterers of the plaza.

"Los Apachés!"

Wherever I went, I was answered with "Los Apachés," and a shake of the forefinger before the nose—a negative sign over all Mexico.

"It is plain, Godé, we can get no guide. We must try this Jornada without one. What say you, voyageur?"

"I am agree, mon maitre—allors!"

And followed by my faithful *compagnon*, with our remaining pack-mule, I took the road that leads to the desert. That night we slept among the ruins of Valverde; and the next morning, after an early start, embarked upon the "Journey of Death."

CHAPTER XI.

THE "JOURNEY OF DEATH."

IN two hours we reach the crossing at Fra Cristobal. Here the road parts from the river, and strikes into the waterless desert. We plunge through the shallow ford, coming out on the eastern bank. We fill our "xuages" with care, and give our animals as much as they will drink. After a short halt to refresh ourselves, we ride onward.

We have not travelled far, before we recognise the appropriate name of this terrible journey. Scattered along the path we see the bones of many animals. There are human bones, too! That white, spheroidal mass, with its grinning rows and serrated sutures—that is a human skull. It lies beside the skeleton of a horse. Horse and rider have fallen together. The wolves have stripped them at the same time. They have dropped down on their thirsty track, and perished in despair, although water, had they known it, was within reach of another effort!

We see the skeleton of a mule, with the alpareja still buckled around it, and an old blanket, flapped and tossed by many a whistling wind.

Other objects, that have been brought there by human aid, strike the eye as we proceed. A bruised canteen, the fragments of a glass bottle, an old hat, a piece of saddle-cloth, a stirrup red with rust, a broken strap, with many like symbols, are strewed along our path, speaking a melancholy language.

We are still only on the border of the desert. We are fresh. How, when we have travelled over and neared the opposite side? Shall we leave such souvenirs?

We are filled with painful forebodings as we look across the arid waste that stretches indefinitely before us. We do not dread the Apaché. Nature herself is the enemy we fear.

Taking the wagon-tracks for our guide, we creep on. We grow silent, as if we were dumb. The mountains of Cristobal sink behind us; and we are almost "out of sight of land." We can see the ridges of the Sierra Blanca away to the eastward; but before us, to the south, the eye encounters no mark or limit.

The sun grows hotter and hotter. I knew this would be the case when we started. It was one of those cool mornings, with fog on the river and in the air. In all my wanderings through many climes, I have observed such mornings to be the harbingers of sultry hours at noon.

The sun is climbing upward, and every moment his rays become fiercer and more fervid. There is a strong wind blowing; but it does not fan us into coolness. On the contrary, it lifts the burning crystals, and spits them painfully in our faces!

The sun has climbed to the zenith. We toil on through the yielding sand. For miles we see no traces of vegetation. The wagon-tracks guide us no longer. The drift has obscured them!

We enter a plain covered with artemisia and clumps of the hideous greasewood.

The warped and twisted branches impede our progress. For hours we ride through thickets of the bitter sage; and at length enter another region, sandy and rolling. Long, arid spurs shoot down from the mountains, and decline into ridges of dry, drifting sand. Now, not even the silvery leaf of the artemisia cheers our path. Before us we see nothing but barren, yellow waste—trackless and treeless!

A tropical sun glances up from the brilliant surface, and we are almost blinded by the refracted rays. The wind blows more lightly, and clouds of dust load the air, sweeping slowly along!

We push forward without guide or any object to indicate our course. We are soon in the midst of bewilderment. A scene of seeming enchantment springs up around us. Vast towers of sand—borne up by the whirlblast—rise vertically to the sky. They move to and fro over the plain. They are yellow and luminous. The sun glistens among their floating crystals. They move slowly, but they are approaching us!

I behold them with feelings of awe. I have heard of travellers lifted in their whirling vortex, and dashed back again from fearful heights!

The pack-mule—frightened at the phenomenon—breaks the lasso, and scampers away among the ridges. Godé has galloped in pursuit. I am alone!

Nine or ten gigantic columns now appear, and stalk over the plain, circling gradually around me! There is something unearthly in the appearance. They resemble creatures of a phantom world. They seem endowed with demon life!

Two of them approach each other. There is a short, gusty struggle, that ends in their mutual destruction. The sand is precipitated to the earth, and the dust floats off in dun, shapeless masses.

Several have shut me within a space, and are slowly closing. My dog howls and barks. My horse cowers with affright, and shivers between my thighs, uttering terrified expressions!

I am irresolute. I sit in my saddle waiting the result, with an indescribable feeling. My ears are filled with a buzzing sound, like the hum of machinery. My eyes distort the natural hues into a fiery brightness. My brain reels. Strange objects appear. The fever is upon me!

The laden currents clash in their wild torsion. I am twisted around, and torn from my saddle—my eyes, mouth, and ears are filled with dust. Sand, stones, and branches strike me spitefully in the face; and I am flung with violence to the earth!

* * * *

I lay for a moment where I had fallen, half buried and blind. I could perceive that thick clouds of dust were still sweeping over me.

I was neither stunned nor hurt; and I began to grope around me, for as yet I could see nothing. My eyes were full of sand, and pained me exceedingly. Throwing out my arms, I felt for my horse—I called him by name. A low whimper answered me. I staggered toward the spot, and laid my hands upon him—he was down upon his flank. I seized the bridle, and he sprang up; but I could feel that he was shivering like an aspen!

I stood by my horse's head for nearly half an hour, rubbing the dust from my eyes, and waiting until the simoom might settle away. At length the atmosphere grew clearer, and I could see the sky. The sand still drifted along the ridges, and I could not distinguish the surface of the plain. There were no signs of Godé. He might be near me, notwithstanding; and I shouted loudly, calling him by name. I listened, but there was no answer. Again I raised my voice, and with a like result. There was no sound but the singing of the wind.

I mounted; and commenced riding over the plain in search of my comrade. I had no idea of what direction he might have taken.

I made a circuit of a mile or so—still calling his name as I went. I received no reply, and could see no traces upon the ground. I rode for an hour, galloping from ridge to ridge, but still without meeting any signs of my comrade or the mules. I pulled up in despair. I had shouted until I was faint and hoarse. I could search no longer.

I was thirsty and would drink. "O God! my *xuages* are broken! the pack-mule has carried off the water-skin."

The crushed calabash still hung upon its thong; but the last drops it had contained were trickling down the flanks of my horse. I knew that I might be fifty miles from water!

You cannot understand the fearfulness of this situation. You live in a northern zone—in a land of pools, and streams, and limpid springs. You have never felt thirst. You know not the want of water. It gushes from every hill-side; and you have grown fastidious about its quality. You complain of its hardness, its softness, or its want of crystal purity. How unlike the denizen of the desert, the voyageur of the prairie sea! Water is his chief care; his ever present solicitude. Water the divinity he worships.

Hunger he can stifle, so long as a patch of his leathern garment hangs to him. Should game not appear, he can trap the marmot, catch the lizard, and gather the prairie crickets. He knows every root and seed that will sustain life. Give him water, and he will live and struggle on. He will, in time, crawl out of the desert. Without this, he may chew the leaden bullet, or the pebble of chalcidony. He may split the spheroid cactus; and open the intestines of the butchered buffalo; but in the end he must die. Without water, even in the midst of plenty—plenty of food—he must die. Ah! you know not thirst. It is a fearful thing. In the wild western desert, it is the *thirst that kills!*

No wonder I was filled with despair. I believed myself to be about the middle of the Jornada. I knew that I could never reach the other side without water. The yearning had already begun. My throat and tongue felt shrivelled and parched. Thirst and fever had done it. The desert dust, too, had contributed its share. Fierce desires already gnawed me with ceaseless tooth!

I had lost all knowledge of the course I should take. The mountains—hitherto our guide—seemed to trend in every direction. Their numerous spurs puzzled me.

I remembered hearing of a spring, the Ojo del Muerto, that was said to lie westward of the trail. Sometimes there was water in this spring. On other occasions travellers had reached it, only to find the fountain dried up, and leave their bones upon its banks! So ran the tales in Socorro.

For some minutes I vacillated; and then, pulling the right rein of my bridle almost involuntarily, I headed my horse westward. I would seek the spring, and, should I fail to find it, push on to the river. This was turning out of my course; but I must reach the water, and save my life.

I sat on my saddle, faint and choking, leaving my animal to go at will. I had lost the energy to guide him.

He went many miles, westward, for the sun told me the course. I was suddenly roused from my stupor. A glad sight was before me. A lake! A lake shining like crystal! Was I certain I saw it? Could it be the *mirage?* No. Its outlines were too sharply defined. It had not that filmy whitish appearance which distinguishes the latter phenomenon. No. It was not the mirage. It was water!

I involuntarily pressed the spur against the sides of my horse. But he needed not that. He had already eyed the water; and sprang forward, inspirited with new energy. The next moment he was in it to his flanks.

I flung myself from the saddle with a plunge. I was about to lift the water in my concave palms, when the actions of my horse attracted me. Instead of drinking greedily, he stood tossing his head with snorts of disappointment! My dog too refused to lap; and ran along the shore whining and howling!

I knew what this meant; but, with that common obstinacy which refuses all testimony but the evidence of the senses, I lifted some drops in my hand, and applied them to my lips. They were briny and burning! I might have known this before reaching the lake, for I had ridden through a salt incrustation that surrounded it like a belt of snow. But my brain was fevered. My reason had left me!

It was of no use remaining where I was. I climbed back into my saddle; and rode along the shore, over fields of snow-white salt! Here and there, my horse's hoof ran against bleaching bones of animals, the remains of many a victim. Well was this lake named the Laguna del Muerto, the "Lake of Death!"

Reaching its southern point, I again headed westward, in hopes of striking the river.

From this time until a later period, when I found myself in a far different scene, I have no distinct memories. Incidents I remember, unconnected with each other, but nevertheless real. These are linked, in my memory, with others so wild and improbable, that I can only consider the latter as fancies of the madness that was then upon me. But some were real. My reason must have returned at intervals, by some strange oscillation of the brain!

I remember dismounting on a high bank: I must have travelled unconsciously for hours before, for the sun was low down, on the horizon, as I alighted. It was a very high bank—a precipice—and below me I saw a beautiful river sweeping onward through groves of emerald greenness. I thought there were many birds fluttering in the groves; and their voices rang in delicious melody. There was fragrance on the air; and the scene below me seemed an Elysium. I thought that, around where I stood, ail was bleak, and barren, and parched with intolerable heat. I was tortured with a slakeless thirst, that grew fiercer as I gazed on the flowing water. These were real incidents. All this was true.

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I must drink. I must to the river. It is cool, sweet water. Oh! I must drink. What! A horrid cliff! No—I will not go down there. I can descend more easily here. Who are these forms? Who are you, sir? Ah! it is you, my brave Moro; and you, Alp. Come! Come! Follow me! Down—down to the river! Ah! Again that accursed cliff! Look at the beautiful water!

It smiles! It ripples—on—on—on! Let us drink! No—not yet—we cannot yet. We must go farther. Ugh! Such a height to leap from! But we must drink—one and all. Come, Godé! Come, Moro—old friend! Alp! Come on! We will reach it—we will drink. Who is Tantalus? Ha! ha! Not I—not I. Stand back, fiends! Do not push me over! Back! back, I say! Oh!

* * * *

I thought that forms—many of them—forms, strange and fiend-like—clustered around me, and dragged me to the brink of the cliff. I was launched out in the air. I felt myself falling—falling—falling, and still came no nearer to the green trees and the bright water, though I could see them shining below me!

* * * *

I rest upon a rock—a mass of vast dimensions—but it is not at rest. It is swimming onward through empty space. I cannot move myself. I lie helpless—stretched along its surface—while it sweeps onward. It is an aerolite. It can be nothing but that. O God! there will be a terrible collision when it strikes some planet world! Horror! horror!

* * *

I am lying on the ground—the ground of the earth. It upheaves beneath me, and oscillates to and fro like the undulations of an earthquake!

* * *

Part of all this was reality; part was a dream—a dream that bore some resemblance to the horrors of a *first intoxication*.

CHAPTER XII.

ZOE.

I **SAW** tracing the figures upon the curtains. They were scenes of the olden time. Mailed knights, helmeted and mounted, dashing at each other with couched lances, or tumbling from their horses, pierced by the spear. Other scenes there were: noble dames, sitting on Flemish palfreys, and watching the flight of the merlin hawk. There were pages in waiting; and dogs, of curious and extinct breeds, held in the leash. Perhaps these never existed, except in the dreams of some old-fashioned artist; but my eye followed their strange shapes with a sort of half-idiotic wonder

I was forcibly impressed with the noble features of the dames. Was that, too, a fancy of the painter? or were those divine outlines of face and figure typical of the times? If so, no wonder that corselets were crushed and lances shivered for their smiles.

Metallic rods upheld the curtains—rods that shone brightly, and curved upwards, forming a canopy. My eyes ran along these rods, scanning their configuration, and admiring, as a child admires, the regularity of their curves. I was not in my own land. These things were strange to me: "Yet," thought I, "I have seen something like them before;" but where? Oh! this I know—with its broad stripes and silken texture—it is a Navajo blanket! Where was I last? In New Mexico? Yes. Now I remember—the Jornada! but how came I——?

"Can I untwist this? It is close woven—it is wool—fine wool. No, I cannot separate a thread from——"

"My fingers! how white and thin they are! and my nails—blue, and long as the talons of a bird! I have a beard! I feel it

on my chin. What gave me a beard? I never wear it; I will shave it off—ha!—my moustache!

“The knights—how they tilt at each other! Bloody work! That bold fellow—the smaller too—will unhorse the other. I can tell from the spring of his horse, and the way he sits him. Horse and rider are the same being now. The same mind unites them by a mysterious link. The horse feels with his rider. He cannot fail to conquer, charging thus.

“Those beautiful ladies! She with the hawk perched on her arm—how brilliant—how bold, yet lovely!”

I was wearied, and slept again. * * *

Once more my eyes were tracing the figures upon the curtains—the knights and dames—the hounds, hawks, and horses. But my brain had become clearer, and music was flowing into it. I lay silent, and listened.

The voice was a female's. It was soft and finely modulated. Some one played upon a stringed instrument. I recognised the tones of the Spanish harp; but the song was French—a song of Normandy; and the words were in the language of that romantic land! I wondered at this, for my consciousness of late events was returning, and I knew that I was far from France.

The light was streaming over my couch, and, turning my face to the front, I saw that the curtains were drawn aside.

I was in a large room, oddly, but elegantly furnished. Human figures were before me, seated and standing. Some were reclining upon the floor—others were seated upon chairs and ottomans; and all appeared to be busy with some occupation. I thought there were many figures—six or eight at the least. This proved to be an illusion. I found that the objects before me made duplicate impressions upon my diseased retina; and every thing appeared to exist in pairs—the counterparts of each other! After looking steadily for a while, my vision became more distinct and reliable; and I saw that there were but three persons in the room—a man and two females.

I remained silent—not certain but that the scene before me was only some new phase of my dream. My eyes wandered from one of the living figures to another, without attracting the attention of any of them.

They were all in different attitudes, and occupied differently.

Nearest me was a woman of middle age, seated upon a low ottoman. The harp I had heard was before her, and she continued to play. She must have been, I thought, when young, a woman of extreme beauty. She was still beautiful in a certain sense. The noble features were there, though I could perceive that they had been scathed by more than ordinary suffering of the mind. The silken surface had yielded to care as well as time.

She was a Frenchwoman—an ethnologist could have told that at a glance. Those lines—the characteristics of her highly-gifted race—were easily traceable. I thought there was a time when

that face had witched many a heart with its smiles. There were no smiles on it now, but a deep, yet intellectual expression of melancholy. This I perceived too in her voice—in her song—in every note that vibrated from the strings of the instrument.

My eye wandered farther. A man of more than middle age stood by the table, near the centre of the room. His face was turned towards me; and its nationality was as easily determined as that of the lady. The high, florid cheeks—the broad front—the prominent chin—the small, green cap, with its long peak and conical crown—the blue spectacles—were all characteristics. He was a German. It was a face not intellectual in its expression, yet have men, with such a physiognomy, given proofs of intellectual research in every department of science and art—research deep and wonderful, with ordinary talents and extraordinary labour—labour Herculean, that knows no wearying. Peison piled on Ossa. I thought of this as I scanned the features of the man.

His occupation was also characteristic of his nationality. Before him were strewed over the table, and upon the floor, the objects of his study—plants and shrubs of various species. He was busy with these—classifying, and carefully laying them out between the leaves of his portfolio. It was evident that the old man was a botanist.

A glance to the right, and the naturalist and his labours were no longer regarded. I was looking upon the loveliest object that ever came before my eyes; and my heart bounded within me, as I strained forward in the intensity of its admiration. The Iris on the summer shower—the rosy dawn—the brilliant hues of the bird of Juno—are bright, soft things. Blend them—blend all the beauties of nature in one harmonious whole—and there will still be wanting that mysterious essence, that enters the heart of the beholder, while gazing upon the loveliness of the female form.

Of all created things, there is none so fair—none so lovely—as a lovely woman!

Yet it was not a woman that held my gaze captive, but a child—a girl—a maid—standing upon the threshold of womanhood—ready to cross it at the first summons of Love!

Men call beauty an arbitrary thing—a fancy—a caprice—a fashion—that to which we are *used*. How often do we hear this hackneyed opinion, while he who utters it revels in the conceit of his own wisdom? “Every eye forms its own beauty.” A false and shallow sophism. We might as well declare that every tongue forms its own taste. Is honey sweet? Is wormwood bitter? Yes—in both cases—sweet, and bitter—to the child or the man—to the savage or the civilized—to the ignorant and the educated. This is true under all circumstances, unless, indeed, where caprice, habit, or fashion forms the *exception*. Why then deny to one sense what all the others so palpably possess? Has not the human eye, in its natural state, its likes and its dislikes? It has;

and the laws that regulate them are as fixed and unerring as the orbits of the stars. We do not know these laws—but that they exist we know: and can prove it as clearly as Leverrier determined the existence of Neptune—a world within reach of telescopic vision—yet wheeling for millions of years, undetected by the sleepless sentinels of astronomy!

Why does the eye rove with delight around the outlines of the circle? along the curve of the ellipse? of every section of the cone? Why does it roam transported along the line of Hogarth? Why does it grieve when this line is broken? Ah! these are its likes and its dislikes—its sweets and its bitters—its honey and its wormwood.

Beauty, then, is not an arbitrary thing. The fancy—the conventionalism—is not in the object, but in the eye of the gazer—the eye uneducated, vulgar, or perchance distorted by fashion. Forms and colours are beautiful, independently of all opinions regarding them.

There is still a higher point which may be established in connection with this theory—an intellectual cause can be assigned why an object is beautiful or otherwise. Intellect has its forms and shapes in the physical world. It dwells in beauty, notwithstanding the many apparent contradictions. Ugliness, hideous word, must exert itself to obtain what beauty commands without an effort. Hence you see distinction—the presumptive proof of intellectual greatness—so often coupled with physical plainness. Hence the homely histrionic *artiste*—hence the female bibliographer—hence the “*blue*.” On the other hand, beauty sits enthroned like a queen or a goddess. She makes no effort, because she feels not the necessity. The world approaches at her slightest summons, and spreads its offerings at her feet!

These thoughts did not all pass through my mind—though some of them did—while my eyes, delighted, revelled along the graceful curves that outlined the beautiful being before me. I thought I had seen the face somewhere. I had—but a moment before—while looking upon that of the elder lady. They were the same face—using a figure of speech—the type transmitted from mother to daughter. The same high front, and facial angle—the same outline of the nose, straight as a ray of light, with the delicate spiral-like curve of the nostril, which meets you in the Greek medallion. Their hair too was alike in colour, golden; though, in that of the mother, the gold showed an enamel of silver. The tresses of the girl were like sunbeams, straying over a neck and shoulders that, for delicate whiteness, might have been chiselled from the stones of Carrara.

All this may seem high language—figurative, if you will. I can neither write nor speak otherwise on this theme. I will desist, and spare details which, to you, may be of little interest. In return, do me the favour to believe that the being who impressed me then and for ever, was beautiful—was lovely.

“Ah! it wod be ver much kindness if madame and ma’m’selle wod play le Marseillaise—le grand Marseillaise. What say mine lieber freilen?”

“Zoe, Zoe! take thy bandolon. Yes, doctor, we will play it for you with pleasure. You like the music? So do we. Come, Zoe!”

The young girl, who up to this time had been watching intently the labours of the naturalist, glided to a remote corner of the room, and taking up an instrument resembling the guitar, returned and seated herself by her mother. The bandolon was soon placed in concert with the harp; and the strings of both vibrated to the thrilling notes of the “Marseillaise.”

There was something exceedingly graceful in the performance. The instrumentation, as I thought, was perfect, and the voices of the players accompanied it in a sweet and spirited harmony. As I gazed upon the girl Zoe—her features animated by the thrilling thoughts of the anthem—her whole countenance radiant with light—she seemed some immortal being—a young goddess of liberty, calling her children “to arms!”

The botanist had desisted from his labours, and stood listening with delighted attention. At each return of the thrilling invocation, “*Aux armes, citoyens!*” the old man snapped his fingers, and beat the floor with his feet, marking the time of the music. He was filled with the same spirit which at that time over all Europe was gathering to its crisis!

“Where am I? French faces—French music—French voices, and the conversation in French!” for the botanist addressed the females in that language, though with a strong Rhenish *patois*, that confirmed my first impressions of his nationality. “Where am I?”

My eye ran around the room in search of an answer. I could not recognise the furniture. The cross-legged Campeachy chairs—a rebozo—the palm-leaf *petaté*—“Ha—Alp!”

The dog lay stretched along the mattress near my couch, and sleeping.

“Alp! Alp!”

“Oh! mamma—mamma—écoutez! the stranger calls.”

The dog sprang to his feet, and throwing his fore-paws upon the bed, stretched his nose toward me, with a joyous whimpering. I reached out my hand and patted him, at the same time giving utterance to some expressions of endearment.

“Oh! mamma—mamma! he knows him—voilà!”

The lady rose hastily and approached the bed. The German seized me by the wrist, pushing back the San Bernard, who was bounding to spring upward.

“Mon Dieu! he is well. His eyes, doctor, how changed!”

“Ya—ya—moch better—ver moch better. Hush—away, tog! Keep away, mine goot tog!”

“Who—where—tell me, where am I—who are you?”

“Do not fear—we are friends—you have been ill.”

"Yes—yes—we are friends—you have been ill, sir. Do not fear us—we will watch you. This is the good doctor. This is mamma, and I am"—

"An angel from heaven—beautiful Zoe!"

The child looked at me with an expression of wonder; and blushed, as she said—

"Hear, mamma! He knows my name!"

It was the first compliment she had ever received from the lips of love

"It is goot, madame—he is ver moch relief—he ver soon get over now. Keep away, mine goot Alp! Your master he get well; goot tog, down!"

"Perhaps, doctor, we should leave him—the noise"—

"No, no! if you please, stay with me—the music—will you play again?"

"Yes, the music is ver goot—ver goot for te prain."

"Oh! mamma; let us play, then."

Both mother and daughter took up their instruments, and again commenced playing.

I listened to the sweet strains, watching the fair musicians a long while. My eyes at length became heavy; and the realities before me changed into the soft outlines of a dream.

* * * *

My dream was broken by the abrupt cessation of the music. I thought I heard, through my sleep, the opening of a door. When I looked to the spot lately occupied by the musicians, I saw that they were gone! The bandolon had been thrown down upon the ottoman, where it lay, but *she* was not there!

I could not, from my position, see the whole of the apartment; but I knew that some one had entered at the outer door. I heard expressions of welcome and endearment—a rustling of dresses—the words "papa," "my little Zoe," the latter uttered in the voice of a man. Then followed some explanations in a lower tone, which I could not hear.

A few minutes elapsed, and I lay silent and listening. Presently there were footsteps in the hall. A boot, with its jingling rowels, struck upon the tiled floor. The footsteps entered the room, and approached the bed. I started as I looked up. *The scalp-hunter was before me!*

CHAPTER XIII.

SEGUIN.

“You are better—you will soon be well again. I am glad to see that you recover.”

He said this without offering his hand.

“I am indebted to you for my life. Is it not so?”

It is strange that I felt convinced of this, the moment that I set my eyes upon the man. I think such an idea crossed my mind before—after awaking from my long dream. Had I encountered him in my struggles for water? or had I dreamed it?

“Oh, yes,” answered he, with a smile, “but you will remember that I had something to do with your being exposed to the risk of losing it.”

“Will you take this hand? Will you forgive me?”

After all, there is something selfish even in gratitude. How strangely had it changed my feelings towards this man! I was begging the hand, which, but a few days before, in the pride of my morality, I had spurned from me as a loathsome thing.

But there were other thoughts that influenced me. The man before me was the husband of the lady—was the father of Zoe. His character—his horrid calling, were forgotten; and the next moment our hands were joined in the embrace of friendship!

“I have nothing to forgive. I honour the sentiment that induced you to act as you did. This declaration may seem strange to you. From what you knew of me, you acted rightly; but there may be a time, sir, when you will know me better—when the deeds, which you abhor, may seem to you not only pardonable, but justifiable. Enough of this at present. The object of my being now at your bedside, is to request that *what you do know of me, be not uttered here!*”

His voice sank to a whisper as he uttered this—pointing, at the same time, towards the door of the room.

“But how,” I asked, wishing to draw his attention from this unpleasant theme, “how came I in this house? It is yours, I perceive. How came I here? Where did you find me?”

"In no very safe position," answered he, with a smile. "I can scarcely claim the merit of saving you. Your noble horse you may thank for that."

"Ah! my horse—my brave Moro! I have lost him."

"Your horse is standing at the maize-trough, not ten paces from where you lie. I think you will find him in somewhat better condition than when you last saw him. Your mules are without. Your packs are safe. You will find them here," and he pointed to the foot of the bed.

"And——?"

"Godé you would ask for," said he, interrupting me. "Do not be uneasy on his account. He, too, is in safety. He is absent just now, but will soon return."

"How can I thank you? This is good news indeed. My brave Moro! and Alp here! But how—you say my horse saved me. He has done so before; how can this be?"

"Simply thus. We found you many miles from this place, on a cliff that overlooks the Del Norté. You were hanging over on your lazo, that, by a lucky accident, had become entangled around your body. One end of it was knotted to the bit-ring, and the noble animal, thrown back on his haunches, sustained your weight upon his neck."

"Noble Moro! what a terrible situation!"

"Ay, you may say that. Had you fallen from it, you would have passed through a thousand feet of air before striking the rocks below. It was indeed a fearful situation."

"I must have staggered over in my search for water."

"In your delirium you walked over. You would have done so a second time, had we not prevented you. When we drew you up on the cliff, you struggled hard to get back. You saw the water below, but not the precipice. Thirst is a terrible thing—an insanity of itself."

"I remember something of all this. I thought it had been a dream."

"Do not trouble your brain with these things. The doctor here admonishes me to leave you. I have an object, as I have said," here a sad expression passed over the countenance of the speaker, "else I should not have paid you this visit. I have not many moments to spare. To-night I must be far hence. In a few days I will return. Meanwhile compose yourself, and get well. The doctor here will see that you want for nothing. My wife and daughter will nurse you."

"Thanks! thanks!"

You will do well to remain where you are, until your friends return from Chihuahua. They will pass not far from this place; and I will warn you when they are near. You are a student. There are books here, in different languages. Amuse yourself. *They* will give you music. Monsieur, adieu!"

"Stay, sir! one moment. You seem to have a strange fancy to my horse?"

"Ah! monsieur, it was no fancy—but I will explain that at some other time. Perhaps the necessity no longer exists."

"Take him, if you will. Another will serve my purpose."

"No, monsieur. Do you think I could rob you of what you esteem so highly, and with such just reason too? No, no. Keep the good Moro. I do not wonder at your attachment to the noble brute."

"You say that you have a long journey to-night. Then, take him for the time."

"That offer I will freely accept; for, indeed, my own horse is somewhat jaded. I have been two days in the saddle. Well—adieu!"

Seguin pressed my hand, and walked away. I heard the "chink-chink" of his spurs, as he crossed the apartment; and the next moment the door closing behind him.

I was alone; and lay listening to every sound that reached me from without. In about half an hour after he had left me, I heard the hoof-strokes of a horse, and saw the shadow of a horseman passing outside the window. He had departed on his journey—doubtless on the performance of some red duty connected with his fearful vocation!

I lay for a while, harassed in mind, thinking of this strange man. Then sweet voices interrupted my meditations; before me appeared lovely faces; and the scalp-hunter was forgotten.

CHAPTER XIV.

LOVE.

I WOULD compress the history of the ten days following into as many words. I would not weary you with the details of my love—a love that, in the short space of a few hours, became a passion deep and ardent!

I was young at the time—at just such an age as to be impressed by the romantic incidents that surrounded me and had thrown this beautiful being in my way—at that age, when the heart, unguarded by cold calculations of the future, yields unresistingly to the electrical impressions of love. I say, electrical. I believe that, at this age, the sympathies that spring up between heart and heart are purely of this nature.

At a later period of life, that power is dissipated and divided. Reason rules it. We become conscious of the capability of transferring our affections, for they have already broken faith; and we lose that sweet confidence that comforted the loves of our youth. We are either imperious or jealous, as the advantages appear in our favour, or against us. A gross alloy enters into the love of our middle life; sadly detracting from the divinity of its character.

I might call that, I then felt, my first real passion. I thought I had loved before, but no; it was only a dream—the dream of the village schoolboy, who saw heaven in the bright eyes of his coy classmate; or, perhaps, at the family pic-nic, in some romantic dell, had tasted the rosy cheek of his pretty cousin.

I grew strong; and with a rapidity that surprised the skilful man of herbs. Love fed and nourished the fire of life. The will often effects the deed, and say as you may, volition has its power

upon the body. The wish to be well, an object to live for, are often the speediest restoratives. They were mine.

I grew stronger, and rose from my couch. A glance at the mirror told me that my colour was returning.

Instinct teaches the bird, while wooing his mate, to plume his pinions to their highest gloss; and a similar feeling now rendered me solicitous about my toilet. My portmanteau was ransacked—my razors drawn forth—the beard disappeared from my chin—and my moustache was trimmed to its wonted dimensions.

I confess all this. The world had told me I was not ill-looking, and I believed what it said. I am mortal in my vanities. Are not you?

With her—Zoe—child of nature in its most perfect innocence—there were no such conceits. The trickery of the toilet never entered into her thoughts. She knew not of the graces which had been so lavishly bestowed upon her. No one had ever told her of her beauty. I had learned the strange fact, that, except her father, the old botanist, and the Pueblo peons—the servants of the house—I was the only person of my sex she had ever seen, since a very early period of her life! For years had she and her mother lived in the seclusion of their own home—a seclusion as complete as that of a convent. There was a mystery in all this; and it was only afterwards that it was revealed to me.

Hers, then, was a virgin heart—pure and spotless. A heart into whose soft dreams the light of love had not yet flung its ray—against whose holy innocence love's god had not yet winged a single arrow!

Are you of my sex? Have you ever desired to become the lord of a heart like this? If you can answer these interrogations in the affirmative, then do I tell you—what you may well remember—that any exertions you made to attain this end were idle. You were loved at once, or never!

The *virgin* heart is not gained by the finesse of courtship. It has no halfway likings, that may yield to tender assiduity on your part. An object either attracts or repels it; and the impression is quick as the lightning's flash. It is the throwing of a die; you have won, or you have won not. If the latter, you may as well desist. No effort can overcome the obstacle, and produce the emotion of love. Friendship you may gain—love, never. No coquetry of yours can make that heart jealous; no favours you may bestow can cause it to love you. You may conquer worlds, yet not control its secret and silent throbbings. You may be the hero of a thousand tongues, yet he, whose image has been flung into that little heart, will be *its* hero, higher and nobler than all others! That fair young creature, its owner, will be wholly his, however humble, however worthless *he* may be. With her there will be no reservation, no reasoning, no caution, no cunning. She will yield alone to the mystic promptings of nature. Under their influence, she will bind her whole heart to the altar, even when she knows that *he* will make it a bleeding sacrifice!

Is it thus with the heart more matured—oft assailed? with the belle? the coquette? No. Rejected here, you need not despair. You may have qualities, *en perdu*, that will change the frown to a smile. You may do great deeds. You may achieve renown; and the scorn, that once repelled you, may become humility at your feet. Still this may be love—and strong love, too—founded upon the admiration of some intellectual, or, perhaps, physical quality which you have thus proved yourself possessed of. It is a love guided by reason, and not the mysterious instinct that rules the former. On which of these loves do men build the highest triumph? Of which are they most proud? Of the latter? Alas! no; and let Him who made us answer why; but *I never saw the man, who would not rather be beloved for the beauties of his person than the excellences of his mind!* You may blame me for this declaration. You may deny it. *It is true.* Oh! there is no joy so sweet, no triumph so thrilling, as when we have drawn to our bosom the quivering little captive, whose heart throbs with the pure pulsations of a maiden love!

These are after-thoughts. I was, at the time I am writing about, too young to have reasoned thus, too little skilled in love's diplomacy; and yet, many a process of reasoning passed through my mind, and many a scheme was devised, to enable me to discover whether I was then beloved.

There was a guitar in the house. I had learnt in my college days to touch the strings, and its music delighted both Zoe and her mother. I sang to them the songs of my own land, songs of love; and with a throbbing heart watched whether the burning words produced any impression upon *her*. More than once, I have laid aside the instrument with feelings of disappointment.

From day to day, strange reflections passed through my mind. Could it be that she was too young to understand the import of the word love? too young to be inspired with a passion? She was but twelve years of age; but then she was the child of a sunny clime; and I had often seen at that age, under the warm sky of Mexico, the wedded bride, the fond mother!

Day after day, we were together alone. The botanist was busy with his studies, and the silent mother occupied with the duties of her household.

Love is not blind. It may be to all the world beside; but to its own object it is watchful as the Argus. * * *

I was skilled in the use of the crayon; and I amused my companion by sketches—upon scraps of paper, and the blank leaves of her music. Many of these were the figures of females, in different attitudes and costumes. In one respect they resembled each other—their faces were alike!

The child, without divining the cause, had noticed this peculiarity in the drawings.

"Why is it?" she asked, one day, as we sat together. "These ladies are all in different costumes—of different nations, are they not?—and yet there is a resemblance in their faces! They have all the same features; indeed, exactly the same, I think."

"It is *your* face, Zoe. I can sketch no other."

She raised her large eyes, and bent them upon me with an expression of innocent wonder. Was she blushing? No!

"Is that like me?"

"It is, as nearly as I can make it."

"And why do you not sketch other faces?"

"Why! because I—Zoe, I fear you would not understand me."

"Oh! Enrique, do you think me so bad a scholar? Do I not understand all that you tell me of the far countries where you have been? Surely I may comprehend this as well?"

"I will tell you, then, Zoe."

I bent forward, with a burning heart and trembling voice.

"It is because—your face is ever before me—I can paint no other. It is that—I *love you, Zoe!*"

"Oh! is that the reason? And when you love one, their face is always before you, whether they themselves be present or no? is it not so?"

"It is so," I replied, with a painful feeling of disappointment.

"And is that love, Enrique?"

"It is."

"Then must I *love you*; for, wherever I may be, I can see your face—how plainly, before me! If I could use this pencil as you, I am sure I could paint it, though you were not near me! What then? Do you think I *love you*, Enrique?"

No pen could trace my feelings at that moment. We were seated; and the sheet, on which were the sketches, was held jointly between us. My hand wandered over its surface, until the unresisting fingers of my companion were clasped in mine. A wilder emotion followed the electric touch—the paper fell upon the floor—and with a proud, but trembling heart, I drew the yielding form to mine!

There was no resistance. Our lips met in the first kiss—a kiss of reciprocal love. I felt her heart throb and flutter, as she lay upon my breast. Oh, joy! joy! *I was the lord of that little heart*

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CHAPTER XV.

LIGHT AND SHADE.

THE house we inhabited stood in a quadrangular enclosure that sloped down to the banks of the river—the Del Norte. This enclosure was a garden, or shrubbery, guarded on all sides by high thick walls of *adobe*. Along the summit of these walls had been planted rows of cactus, that threw out huge thorny limbs, forming an impassable *chevaux de frise*. There was but one entrance to the house and garden, through a strong wicket gate—which, I had noticed, was always shut and barred. I had no desire to go abroad. The garden—a large one—hitherto had formed the limit of my walk; and through this I often rambled with Zoe and her mother; but oftener with Zoe alone.

There were many objects of interest about the place. It was a ruin; and the house itself bore evidence of better times. It was a large building in the Moro-Spanish style, with flat roof, (*azotea*,) and notched parapet running along the front. Here and there the little stone turrets of this parapet had fallen off, exhibiting evidence of neglect and decay.

The garden bore these symptoms throughout its whole extent; at the same time, in its ruins you might read ample testimony of the great care that had been once bestowed upon it. Crumbling statues, dry fountains, ruined arbours, weedgrown walks, attested its former grandeur—its present neglect. There were many trees of singular and exotic species; but there was a wildness in the appearance of their fruit and foliage; and they had grown into thickets, interlacing each other. There was a free beauty, however, in this very wildness, that charmed one; and the sense was further delighted with the aroma of a thousand flowers that continually floated upon the air.

The walls of the garden impinged upon the river, and there ended; for the bank was steep and vertical, and the deep still water that ran under it formed a sufficient protection on that side.

A thick grove of cotton-woods fringed the bank of the river; and under their shade had been erected a number of seats of japanned mason-work, in a style peculiar to Spanish countries. There were steps cut in the face of the bank, overhung with drooping shrubs, and leading to the water's edge. I had noticed a small skiff moored under the willows, where these steps went down to the water.

From this point only, could you see beyond the limits of the enclosure. The view was magnificent, and commanded the winding of the Del Norte for a distance of miles.

The country outside seemed wild and uninhabited. Nearly as far as the eye could range, the beautiful frondage of the cotton-wood groves covered the landscape, and cast its soft shadows on the river. Southward, away near the horizon's edge, a single spire glanced over the tops of the trees. This was the church of El Paso del Norte, whose vine-clad hills could be seen rising against the distant background of the sky. Along the east towered the Rocky Mountains—the mysterious chain of the Organos, whose dark summit lake, with its ebbing tides, inspires the lone hunter with a superstitious terror. To the west, low down and dimly seen, were the twin ranges of the Mimbres, those mountains of gold, whose desert passes rarely echo the tread of a human foot. Even the reckless trapper turns aside, when he approaches that unknown land, that stretches northward from the Gila—the land of the Apache and the cannibal Navajo! * * *

Evening after evening, we sought the grove of cotton-woods; and, seated upon one of the benches, together watched the glowing sunset. At this time of the day we were ever alone—I and my little companion.

I have called her my little companion, though I thought, at this time, that she had suddenly grown to a larger stature, assuming the form and outlines of a woman! In my eyes, she was a child no longer. Her form had become more developed—her bosom rose higher in its gentle undulations—and her movements appeared to me womanlike and commanding. Her colour, too, seemed heightened; and a radiant brilliance sported over her features. The love-light, streaming from her large brown eyes, added to their liquid lustre. There was a change of mind and body. It was the mystic transformation of love. She was under the influence of its god!

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One evening, as usual, we sat under the solemn shadow of the grove. We had brought with us the guitar and bandolon; but, after a few notes had been struck, the music was forgotten; and the instruments lay upon the grass at our feet. We loved to listen to the music of our own voices. We preferred the utterance of

our own thoughts, to the sentiments of any song, however sweet. There was music enough around us—the hum of the wild bee, as it bid farewell to the closing corolla—the “whoop” of the gruya in the distant sedge, and the soft cooing of the doves as they sat in pairs upon the adjacent branches—like us, whispering their mutual loves.

Autumn had now painted the woods, and the frondage was of every hue. The shadows of the tall trees dappled the surface of the water, as the stream rolled silently on. The sun was far down, and the spire of El Paso gleamed like a golden star, under the parting kiss of his beams. Our eyes wandered, and rested upon the glittering vane.

“The church!” half-soliloquized my companion, “I hardly know what it is like—it is so long since I saw it.”

“How long?”

“Oh! many—many years—I was very young then.”

“And you have not been beyond these walls since then?”

“Oh! yes. Papa has taken us down the river in the boat—mamma and myself—often—but not lately.”

“And have you no wish to go abroad through those gay woods?”

“I do not desire it—I am contented here.”

“But will you always be contented here?”

“And why not, Enrique? When you are near me, why should I not be happy?”

“But when?”—

A dark shadow seemed to cross her thoughts. Benighted with love, she had never reflected on the probability of my leaving her; nor indeed had I. Her cheeks became suddenly pale; and I could see the agony gathering in her eyes, as she fixed them upon me. But the words were out.

“—When I must leave you?”

She threw herself on my breast with a short sharp scream, as though she had been stung to the heart; and in an impassioned voice, cried aloud—

“Oh! my God—my God! leave me? leave me? Oh, you will not leave me? You who have *taught me to love!* O Enrique! why did you tell me that you loved me? Why did you *teach me to love?*”

“Zoe!”

“Enrique—Enrique! say you will not leave me?”

“Never! Zoe—I swear it—never—never!”

I fancied at this moment I heard the stroke of an oar; but the wild tumult of my feelings, and the close embrace of my betrothed—who in the transport of reaction had twined her arms around me—prevented me from rising to look over the bank. It was the plunge of the osprey, thought I; and dismissing the thought, I yielded myself to the long and rapturous kiss. I was raising my head again, when an object, appearing above the bank, caught my eye. It was a black sombrero with its golden band. I knew the wearer at a glance—Seguin!

In a moment, he was beside us.

"Papa!" exclaimed Zoe, rising up and reaching forward to embrace him.

The father put her to one side—at the same time tightly grasping her hand in his. For a moment he remained silent, bending his eyes upon me with an expression I cannot depict. There was in it a mixture of reproach, sorrow, and indignation. I had risen to confront him, but I quailed under that singular glance, and stood abashed and silent.

"And this is the way you have thanked me for saving your life? A brave return, good sir—what think you?"

I made no reply.

"Sir!" continued he, in a voice trembling with emotion, "you have deeply wronged me."

"I know it not; I have *not* wronged you."

"What call you this? trifling with my child!"

"Trifling!" I exclaimed, roused to boldness by the accusation.

"Ay, trifling! Have you not won her affections?"

"I won them fairly."

"Pshaw! sir. This is a child, not a woman. Won them fairly! What can she know of love?"

"Papa! I do know love. I have felt it for many days. Do not be angry with Enrique, for I love him—O papa—in my heart, I love him!"

He turned to her, with a look of astonishment.

"Hear this!" he exclaimed. "O God! my child—my child!"

His voice stung me, for it was full of sorrow.

"Listen, sir," I cried, placing myself directly before him. "I have won the affections of your daughter. I have given mine in return. I am her equal in rank, as she is mine. What crime then have I committed? Wherein have I wronged you?"

He looked at me for some moments without making any reply.

"You would marry her, then?" he said at length, with an evident change in his manner.

"Had I permitted our love thus far, without that intention, I should have merited your reproaches. I should have been 'trifling,' as you have said."

"Marry me!" exclaimed Zoe, with a look of bewilderment.

"Listen! poor child! she knows not the meaning of the word!"

"Ay, lovely Zoe, I will; else my heart, like yours, will be wrecked for ever—O, sir"—

"Come, sir, enough of this. You have won her from herself—you have yet to win her from *me*. I will sound the depth of your affection. I will put you to the proof"—

"Put me to any proof!"

"We shall see—come! let us in. Here, Zoe!"

And, taking her by the hand, he led her toward the house. I followed close behind.

As we passed through a clump of wild orange-trees, the path narrowed; and the father letting go her hand, walked on ahead. Zoe was between us; and as we reached the middle of the grove, she turned suddenly, and, laying her hand upon mine, whispered in a trembling voice: "Enrique—tell me—what is '*to marry?*'"

"Dearest Zoe! not now—it is too difficult to explain—another time—I"—

"Come, Zoe! your hand, child!"

"Papa, I am coming!"

CHAPTER XVI.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

I WAS alone with my host in the apartment I had hitherto occupied. The females had retired to another part of the house; and I noticed that Seguin, on entering, had looked to the door—turning the bolt!

What terrible proof was he going to exact of my faith—of my love? Was he about to take my life? or bind me by some fearful oath—this man of cruel deeds? Dark suspicion shot across my mind; and I sat silent, but not without emotions of fear.

A bottle of wine was placed between us; and Seguin, pouring out two glasses, asked me to drink. This courtesy assured me. "But how if the wine be poi—?" He swallowed his own glass before the thought had fairly shaped itself.

"I am wronging him," thought I. "This man, with all, is incapable of an act of treachery like that."

I drank up the wine. It made me feel more composed and tranquil.

After a moment's silence, he opened the conversation with the abrupt interrogatory—

"What do you know of me?"

"Your name and calling; nothing more."

"More than is guessed at here;" and he pointed significantly to the door. "Who told you thus much of me?"

"A friend, whom you saw in Santa Fé."

"Ah! St. Vrain; a brave, bold man. I met him once in Chihuahua. Did he tell you no more of me than this?"

"No. He promised to enter into particulars concerning you, but the subject was forgotten—the caravan moved on, and we were separated."

"You heard, then, that I was—Seguin—the scalp-hunter? that I was employed by the citizens of El Paso to hunt the Apaché and Navajo? and that I was paid a stated sum for every Indian scalp I could hang upon their gates? You heard all this?"

"I did."

"It is true."

I remained silent.

"Now, sir," he continued after a pause, "would you marry *my* daughter—the child of a wholesale murderer?"

"Your crimes are not hers. She is innocent even of the knowledge of them, as you have said. You may be a demon; *she* is an angel."

There was a sad expression on his countenance, as I said this.

"Crimes—demon"—he muttered, half in soliloquy. "Ay, you may well think this—so judges the world. You have heard the stories of the mountain men in all their red exaggeration. You have heard that during a treaty, I invited a village of the Apaché to a banquet, and poisoned the viands—poisoned the guests, man, woman, and child—and then scalped them! You have heard that I induced to pull upon the drag-rope of a cannon two hundred savages, who knew not its uses; and then fired the piece, loaded with grape, mowing down the row of unsuspecting wretches! These, and other inhuman acts, you have no doubt heard of?"

"It's true. I have heard these stories among the mountain hunters; but I knew not whether to believe them."

"Monsieur, they are false—all false and unfounded."

"I am glad to hear you say this. I could not *now* believe you capable of such barbarities."

"And yet, if they *were* true, in all their horrid details, they would fall far short of the cruelties that have been dealt out by the savage foe to the inhabitants of this defenceless frontier. If you knew the history of this land for the last ten years; its massacres and its murders; its tears and its burnings; its rapes and spoliations; whole provinces depopulated; villages given to the flames; men butchered on their own hearths; women—beautiful women—carried into captivity to satisfy the lust of the desert robber. Oh, God! and I too have shared wrongs that will acquit me in your eyes; perhaps in the eyes of Heaven!"

The speaker buried his face in his hands, and leaned forward on the table. He was evidently suffering from some painful recollection. After a moment, he resumed.

"I would have you listen to a short history of my life."

I signified my assent; and after filling and drinking another glass of wine, he proceeded.

"I am not a Frenchman, as men suppose. I am a Creole—a native of New Orleans. My parents were refugees from St. Domingo; where, after the black revolution, the bulk of their fortune was confiscated by the bloody Christophe.

"I was educated for a civil engineer: and, in this capacity, I was brought out to the mines of Mexico, by the owner of one of them, who knew my father. I was young at the time; and I spent several years employed in the mines of Zacatecas and San Luis Potosi.

"I had saved some money out of my pay; and I began to think of opening upon my own account.

"Rumours had long been current that rich veins of gold existed upon the Gila and its tributaries. The washings had been seen, and gathered in these rivers; and the mother of gold—the milky quartz-rock—cropped out everywhere in the desert mountains of this wild region.

"I started for this country with a select party; and, after traversing it for weeks, in the Mimbres mountains, near the head waters of the Gila, I found the precious ore in its bed. I established a mine; and in five years was a rich man.

"I remembered the companion of my youth—the gentle, the beautiful cousin, who had shared my confidence, and inspired me with my first passion. With me, it was first and last; it was not, as is often the case under similar circumstances, a transient thing. Through all my wanderings I had remembered and loved her. Had she been as true to me?

"I determined to assure myself; and, leaving my affairs in the hands of my *mayoral*, I set out for my native city.

"Adele had been true; and I returned, bringing her with me.

"I built a house in Valverde—the nearest inhabited district to my mine.

"Valverde was then a thriving place—it is now a ruin, which you may have seen in your journey down.

"In this place we lived for years, in the enjoyment of wealth and happiness. I look back upon these days as so many ages of bliss. Our love was mutual and ardent; and we were blessed with two children, both girls. The youngest resembled her mother—the other, I have been told, was more like myself. We doted, I fear, too much on these pledges. We were too happy in their possession.

"At this time a new governor was sent to Santa Fé; a man who—by his wantonness and tyranny—has, since then, ruled the province. There has been no act too vile, no crime too dark for this human monster.

"He offered fair enough at first; and was feasted in the houses of the *ricos* through the valley. As I was classed among these, I was honoured with his visits, and frequently. He resided principally at Albuquerque; and grand fêtes were given at his palace, to which my wife and I were invited as special guests. He in return often came to our house in Valverde, under pretence of visiting the different parts of the province.

"I discovered, at length, that his visits were solely intended for my wife, to whom he had paid some flattering attentions.

"I will not dwell on the beauty of Adele, at this time. You

may imagine that for yourself; and, monsieur, you may assist your imagination, by allowing it to dwell on those graces you appear to have discovered in her daughter; for the little Zoe is a type of what her mother was.

"At the time I speak of, she was still in the bloom of her beauty. The fame of that beauty was on every tongue; and had piqued the vanity of the wanton tyrant. For this reason I became the object of his friendly assiduities.

"I had divined this; but, confiding in the virtue of my wife, I took no notice of his conduct. No overt act of insult as yet claimed my attention.

"Returning on one occasion from a long absence at the mines, Adele informed me, what, through delicacy, she had hitherto concealed, of insults received from his excellency at various times, but particularly in a visit he had paid her during my absence.

"This was enough for Creole blood. I repaired to Albuquerque; and, on the public plaza, in presence of the multitude, I chastised the insulter.

"I was seized and thrown into a prison, where I lay for several weeks. When I was freed, and sought my home again, it was plundered and desolate! The wild Navajo had been there—my household gods were scattered and broken—and my child, O God! my little Adele, was carried captive to the mountains!"

"And your wife—your other child?" I inquired, eager to know the rest.

"They had escaped. In the terrible conflict—for my poor peons battled bravely—my wife, with Zoe in her arms, had rushed out, and hidden in a cave that was in the garden. I found them in the ranche of a vaquero in the woods—whither they had wandered."

"And your daughter, Adele—have you heard aught of her since?"

"Yes—yes—I will come to that in a moment.

"My mine, at the same time, was plundered and destroyed; many of the workmen were slaughtered before they could escape; and the work itself, with my fortune, became a ruin.

"With some of the miners, who had fled, and others of Valverde, who, like me, had suffered, I organized a band, and followed the savage foe; but our pursuit was vain: and we turned back, many of us broken in health and heart.

"Oh! monsieur, you cannot know what it is to have thus lost a favourite child! you cannot understand the agony of the bereaved father!"

The speaker pressed his head between his hands, and remained for a moment silent. His countenance bore the indications of heart-rending sorrow.

"My story will soon be told up to the present time. Who knows the end?"

“For years, I hung upon the frontiers of that Indian country, *hunting* for my child. I was aided by a small band, most of them unfortunates like myself, who had lost wife or daughter in a similar manner. But our means became exhausted, and despair wore us out. The sympathies of my companions grew old and cold. One after another gave up. The government of New Mexico offered us no aid. On the contrary, it was suspected then—it is now known—that the governor himself was in secret league with the Navajo chiefs. He was to leave them unmolested, while they, on their side, promised to plunder *only his enemies!*”

“On learning this terrible secret, I saw the hand that had dealt me the blow. Stung by the disgrace I had put upon him, as well as by my wife’s scorn, the villain was not slow to avenge himself

“Since then, his life has been twice in my power; but the taking of it would, most probably, have forfeited my own; and I had objects for which to live. I may yet find a reckoning day for him.

“I have said that my band melted away. Sick at heart, and conscious of danger in New Mexico, I left the province, and crossed the Jornada to El Paso. Here for a while I lived, grieving for my lost child.

“I was not long inactive. The frequent forays made by the Apaches into Sonora and Chihuahua had rendered the government more energetic in the defence of the frontier. The *presidios* were repaired and garrisoned with more efficient troops; and a band of rangers organized, whose pay was proportioned to the number of scalps they might send back to the settlements!

“I was offered the command of this strange guerilla; and in the hope that I might yet recover my child, I accepted it—I became a scalp-hunter!

“It was a terrible commission; and had revenge alone been my object, it would long since have been gratified. Many a deed of blood have we enacted—many a scene of retaliatory vengeance have we passed through.

“I knew that my captive daughter was in the hands of the Navajoes. I had heard so at various times, from prisoners whom I had taken; but I was always crippled for want of strength in men and means. Revolution after revolution kept the States in poverty and civil warfare; and our interests were neglected or forgotten. With all my exertions, I could never raise a force sufficient to penetrate that desert country north of the Gila, in which lie the towns of the savage Navajoes.”

“And you think”——

“Patience! I shall soon finish. My band is now stronger than ever. I have received certain information, by one just escaped from a captivity among the Navajoes, that the warriors of both tribes are about to proceed southward. They are mustering all their strength, with the intention of making a grand

foray—even, as we have heard, to the gates of Durango. It is my design, then, to enter their country while they are absent, and search for my daughter."

"And you think she still lives?"

"I know it. The same who brought me this news—and who, poor fellow! has left his scalp and ears behind him—saw her often. She is grown up; and is, he says, a sort of queen among them; possessed of strange powers and privileges. Yes—she still lives; and if it be my fortune to recover her, then will this tragic scene be at an end. I will go far hence."

I had listened with deep attention to the strange recital. All the disgust, with which my previous knowledge of this man's character had inspired me, vanished from my mind; and I felt for him compassion—ay, admiration. He had suffered much. Suffering atones for crime; and, in my sight, he was justified. Perhaps I was too lenient in my judgment. It was natural I should be so.

When the revelation was ended, I was filled with emotions of pleasure. I felt a vivid joy to know that *she* was not the offspring of the demon I had deemed him.

He seemed to divine my thoughts, for there was a smile of satisfaction—I might say triumph—on his countenance, as he leaned across the table to refill the wine.

"Monsieur, my story must have wearied you. Drink!"

There was a moment's silence, as we emptied the glasses.

"And now, sir, you know the father of your betrothed—at least somewhat better than before. Are you still in the mind to marry her?"

"Oh, sir! she is now, more than ever, to me a sacred object."

"But you must win her—as I have said—from me."

"Then, sir, tell me how. I am ready for any sacrifice that may be within my power to make."

"You must help me to recover her sister."

"Willingly."

"You must go with me to the Desert."

"I will."

"Enough. We start to-morrow." And he rose, and began to pace the room.

"At an early hour?" I inquired, half fearing that I was about to be denied an interview with her whom I now more than ever longed to embrace.

"By daybreak," he replied, not seeming to heed my anxious manner.

"I must look to my horse and arms," said I, rising and going towards the door, in hopes of meeting her without.

"They have been attended to—Godé is there. Come, boy! She is not in the hall. Stay where you are. I will get the arms you want. Adele! Zoe! Oh, doctor, you are returned with your weeds? It is well. We journey to-morrow. Adele, some coffee,

love! and then let us have some music. Your guest leaves you to-morrow."

The bright form rushed between us with a scream!

"No—no—no—no!" she exclaimed, turning from one to the other, with the wild appeal of a passionate heart.

"Come, little dove," said the father, taking her by the hands, "do not be so easily fluttered. It is but for a short time. He will return again."

"How long, papa? How long, Enrique?"

"But a very short while. It will be longer to me than to you, Zoe."

"Oh! no—no; an hour will be a long time. How many hours do you think, Enrique?"

"Oh! we shall be gone days, I fear."

"Days! O papa! O Enrique! days!"

"Come, little chit—they will soon pass. Go! Help your mamma to make the coffee."

"O papa! days—long days—they will not soon pass when I am alone."

"But you will not be alone. Your mamma will be with you."

"Ah!"

And with a sigh, and an air of abstraction, she departed to obey the command of her father. As she passed out at the door, she again sighed audibly.

The doctor was a silent and wondering spectator to this last scene; and as her figure vanished into the hall, I could hear him muttering to himself,

"O ja! Poor little freilen! I thot as mosh."

CHAPTER XVII.

UP THE DEL NORTE.

I WILL not distress you with a parting scene. We were in our saddles before the stars had died out, and riding along the sandy road.

At a short distance from the house, the path angled, striking into thick, heavy timber. Here I checked my horse, allowing my companions to pass; and, standing in the stirrup, looked back. My eye wandered along the old, gray walls, and sought the *azotea*. Upon the very edge of the parapet, outlined against the pale light of the aurora, was the object I looked for. I could not distinguish the features, but I easily recognised the oval curvings of the figure, cut like a dark medallion against the sky.

She was standing near one of the *yuca* palm-trees that grew up from the *azotea*. Her hand rested upon its trunk, and she bent forward, straining her gaze into the darkness below. Perhaps she saw the waving of a kerchief—perhaps she heard her name, and echoed the parting prayer that was sent back to her on the still breath of the morning. If so, her voice was drowned by the tread of my chafing horse, that, wheeling suddenly, bore me off into the sombre shadows of the forest.

I rode forward, turning at intervals to catch a glimpse of those lovely outlines, but from no other point was the house visible. It lay buried in the dark, majestic woods. I could only see the long bayonets of the picturesque palmillas; and our road now descending among hills, these too were soon hidden from my view.

Dropping the bridle, and leaving my horse to go at will, I fell into a train of thoughts at once pleasant and painful.

I knew that I had imbibed the *love of my life*—that henceforward in it all my hopes would centre, and from it would spring my highest motives. I had just reached manhood; and I was not ignorant of the truth, that a pure love like this is the best guide to our too-erring natures—the best rein to curb their wild wanderings. I was indebted for this knowledge to him who had taught me my earliest lessons; and as his experience had already more than once stood me in stead, I believed him in this. I have since proved the teaching true.

I knew that I had inspired this young creature with a passion deep and ardent as my own—perhaps more vital; for *my* heart had passed through other affections, while *hers* had never throbbled with any, save the subdued solicitudes of a graceful childhood. She had never known emotion. Love was her first strong feeling—her first passion. Would it not, thus enthroned, reign over all other thoughts in her heart's kingdom? She, too, so formed for love—so like its mythic goddess!

These reflections were pleasant. But the picture darkened, as I turned from looking back for the last time; and something whispered me—some demon it was—“You may never see her more.”

This suggestion, even in this hypothetical form, was enough to fill my mind with dark forebodings; and I began to cast my thoughts upon the future. I was going upon no party of pleasure, from which I might return at a fixed hour. Dangers were before me—the dangers of the Desert; and I knew that these were of no ordinary character. In our plans of the previous night, Seguin had not concealed the perils of our expedition. These he had detailed, before exacting my final promise to accompany him. Weeks before, I would not have regarded them. They would only have allured me on to meet them. Now, my feelings were different, for I believed that in *my* life, there was another's. What then if the demon had whispered truly? I may never see her more! It was a painful thought; and I rode on, bent in the saddle, under the influence of its bitterness.

But I was once more upon the back of my favourite Moro, who seemed to “know his rider;” and as his elastic body heaved beneath me, *my* spirit answered his, and began to resume its wonted buoyancy.

After a while, I took up the reins; and, shortening them in my hands, spurred on after my companions.

Our road lay up the river, crossing the shallow ford at intervals, and winding through the bottom-lands, that were heavily timbered. The path was difficult on account of the thick underwood; and although the trees had once been “blazed” for a road, there were no signs of late travel upon it, with the exception of a few solitary horse-tracks. The country appeared wild and uninhabited. This was evident, from the frequency with which deer and antelope swept across our path, or sprang out of the underwood close to

our horses' heads. Here and there, our path trended away from the river, crossing its numerous "loops." Several times we passed large tracts where the heavy timber had been felled and "clearings" had existed. But this must have been long ago, for the land, that had been furrowed by the plough, was now covered with tangled and almost impenetrable thickets. A few broken and decaying logs, or crumbling walls of the *adobe*, were all that remained to attest where the settlers' "rancho" had stood.

We passed a ruined church, with its old turrets dropping by piecemeal. Piles of *adobe* lay around, covering the ground for acres. A thriving village had stood here. Where was it now? Where were the busy gossips? A wild-cat sprang over the brier-laced walls, and made off into the forest. An owl flew sluggishly up from the crumbling cupola, and hovered around our heads—uttering its doleful "woo-hoo-a," that rendered the desolation of the scene more impressive. As we rode through the ruin a dead stillness surrounded us, broken only by the hooting of the night-bird, and the "cranch-cranch" of our horses' feet upon the fragments of pottery that covered the deserted streets.

But where were they who had once made these walls echo with their voices? Who had knelt under the sacred shadow of that once hallowed pile? They were gone; but where? and when? and why?

I put these questions to Seguin; and was answered thus briefly: "The Indians."

The savage it was, with his red spear and scalping-knife—his bow and his battle-axe—his brand, and his poisoned arrows.

"The Navajoes?" I inquired.

"Navajo and Apache."

"But do they come no more to this place?"

A feeling of anxiety had suddenly entered my mind. I thought of our proximity to the mansion we had left. I thought of its unguarded walls. I waited with some impatience for an answer.

"No more," was the brief reply.

"And why?" I inquired.

"This is *our* territory," he answered significantly. "You are now, monsieur, in a country where live strange fellows—you shall see. Wo to the Apache, or Navajo, who may stray into these woods!"

As we rode forward, the country became more open; and we caught a glimpse of high bluffs trending north and south on both sides of the river. These bluffs converged, till the river channel appeared to be completely barred up by a mountain! This was only an appearance. On riding farther, we found ourselves entering one of those fearful gaps—*canons* as they are called—so often met with in the table lands of tropical America.

Through this the river foamed, between two vast cliffs a thousand feet in height, whose profiles, as you approached them, suggested the idea of angry giants, separated by some almighty hand, and

thus left frowning at each other! It was with a feeling of awe that one looked up the face of these stupendous cliffs, and I felt a shuddering sensation as I neared the mighty gate between them.

"Do you see that point?" asked Seguin, indicating a rock that jutted out from the highest ledge of the chasm. I signified in the affirmative, for the question was addressed to myself.

"That is the leap you were so desirous of taking. We found you dangling against yonder rock."

"Good God!" I ejaculated, as my eyes rested upon the dizzy eminence. My brain grew giddy, as I sat in my saddle, gazing upward; and I was fain to ride onward.

"But for your noble horse," continued my companion, "the doctor here would have been stopping about this time to hypothecate upon your bones. Ho! Moro! beautiful Moro!"

"Oh! mein Got! Ya, ya!" assented the botanist, looking up against the precipice with apparently a feeling of awe, such as I felt myself.

Seguin had ridden alongside of me, and was patting my horse on the neck, with expressions of admiration.

"But why?" I asked, the remembrance of our first interview now occurring to me, "why were you so eager to possess him?"

"A fancy."

"Can I not understand it? I think you said then I could not?"

"Oh yes, quite easily, monsieur. I intended to steal my own daughter; and I wanted, for that purpose, to have the aid of your horse."

"But how?"

"It was before I had heard the news of this intended expedition of our enemy. As I had no hopes of obtaining her otherwise, it was my design to have entered their country alone, or with a tried comrade, and by a stratagem to have carried her off. Their horses are swift, yet far inferior to the Arab, as you may have an opportunity of seeing. With such an animal as that, I would have been comparatively safe, unless hemmed in or surrounded; and even then I might have got off with a few scratches. I intended to have disguised myself, and entered their town as one of their own warriors. I have long been master of their language."

"It would have been a perilous enterprise."

"True—it was a *dernier resort*; and only adopted because all other efforts had failed—after years of yearning, deep craving of the heart. I might have perished. It was a rash thought; but I, at that time, entertained it fully."

"I hope we will succeed now."

"I have high hopes. It seems as if some overruling Providence was now acting in my favour. This absence of her captors—and besides, my band has been most opportunely strengthened by the arrival of a number of trappers from the eastern plains. The beaver-skins have fallen, according to their phraseology, to a

'plew a plug;' and they find 'red-skin' pays better. Ah! I hope this will soon be over."

And he sighed deeply as he uttered the last words.

We were now at the entrance of the gorge, and a shady clump of cotton-woods invited us to rest.

"Let us noon here," said Seguin.

We dismounted, and ran our animals out on their trailropes to feed. Then, seating ourselves on the soft grass, we drew forth the viands that had been prepared for our journey.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY.

WE rested above an hour in the cool shade, while our horses refreshed themselves on the "grama" that grew luxuriantly around. We conversed about the singular region in which we were travelling—singular in its geography, its geology, its botany, and its history—singular in all respects.

I am a traveller, as I might say, by profession. I felt an interest in learning something of the wild countries that stretched for hundreds of miles around us; and I knew there was no man living so capable of being my informant as he with whom I then conversed.

My journey down the river had made me but little acquainted with its features. At that time, as I have already related, there was fever upon me; and my memory of objects was as though I had encountered them in some distorted dream.

My brain was now clear; and the scenes through which we were passing—here soft and south-like—there wild, barren, and picturesque—forcibly impressed my imagination.

The knowledge, too, that parts of this region had once been inhabited by the followers of Cortez—as many a ruin testified—that it had been surrendered back to its ancient and savage lords—and the inference that this surrender had been brought about by the enactment of many a tragic scene—induced a train of romantic thought, which yearned for gratification in a knowledge of the realities that gave rise to it.

Seguin was communicative. His spirits were high. His hopes were buoyant. The prospect of again embracing his long-lost child imbued him, as it were, with new life. He had not, he said, felt so happy for many years.

"It is true," said he, in answer to a question I had put, "there is little known of this whole region, beyond the boundaries of the Mexican settlements. They who once had the opportunity of re-

ording its geographical features have left the task undone. They were too busy in the search for gold; and their weak descendants, as you see, are too busy in robbing one another to care for aught else. They know nothing of the country beyond their own borders: and these are every day contracting upon them. All they know of it is the fact that thence come their enemies, whom they dread, as children do ghosts or wolves.

"They are now," continued Seguin, "near the centre of the continent—in the very heart of the American Sahara."

"But," said I, interrupting him, "we cannot be more than a day's ride south of New Mexico—that is not a desert—that is a cultivated country."

"New Mexico is an oasis—nothing more. The desert is around it for hundreds of miles—nay, in some directions you may travel a thousand miles from the Del Norte without seeing one fertile spot. New Mexico is an oasis, which owes its existence to the irrigating waters of the Del Norte. It is the only settlement of white men, from the frontiers of the Mississippi to the shores of the Pacific in California. You approached it by a desert, did you not?"

"Yes. As we ascended from the Mississippi towards the Rocky Mountains, the country became gradually more sterile. For the last three hundred miles or so, we could scarcely find grass or water for the sustenance of our animals. But is it thus north and south of the route we travelled?"

"North and south for more than a thousand miles—from the plains of Texas to the lakes of Canada, along the whole base of the Rocky Mountains—and half way to the settlements on the Mississippi. It is a treeless, herbless land."

"To the west of the mountains?"

"Fifteen hundred miles of desert—that is its length, by at least half as many miles in breadth. The country to the west is of a different character. It is more broken in its outlines, more mountainous, and, if possible, more sterile in its aspect. The volcanic fires have been more active there; and though that may have been thousands of years ago, the igneous rocks in many places look as if freshly upheaved. No vegetation—no climatic action has sensibly changed the hues of the lava and scoriæ that in some places cover the plains for miles. I say no climatic action, for there is but little of that in this central region."

"I do not understand you."

"What I mean is that there is but little atmospheric change. It is one uniform drought; it seldom storms or rains. I know some districts where a drop of rain has not fallen for years."

"And can you account for that phenomenon?"

"I have my theory. It may not satisfy the learned meteorologist, but I will offer it to you."

I listened with attention, for I knew that my companion was a man of science, as of experience and observation; and subjects,

of the character of those about which we conversed, had always possessed great interest for me. He continued :

“There can be no rain without vapor in the air. There can be no vapor in the air, without water on the earth below to produce it. Here there is no great body of water.

“Nor can there be. The whole region of the desert is upheaved—an elevated table-land. We are now nearly 6,000 feet above sea level. Hence its springs are few; and, by hydraulic law, must be fed by its own waters, or those of some region still more elevated, which does not exist on the continent.

“Could I create vast seas in this region, walled in by the lofty mountains that traverse it—and such seas existed consequent to its formation—could I create those seas, without giving them an outlet, not even allowing the smallest rill to drain them—in process of time, they would empty themselves into the ocean, and leave every thing as it now is—a desert.”

“But how? by evaporation?”

“On the contrary, the absence of evaporation would be the cause of their drainage! I believe it has been so.”

“I cannot understand that.”

“It is simply thus. This region possesses, as we have said, great elevation; consequently a cool atmosphere, and a much less evaporating power than that which draws up the water of the ocean. Now there would be an interchange of vapor between the ocean and these elevated seas, by means of winds and currents—for it is only by that means that any water can reach this interior plateau. That interchange would result in favor of the inland seas, by reason of their less evaporation, as well as from other causes. We have not time, or I could demonstrate such a result. I beg you will admit it, then; and reason it out at your leisure.”

“I perceive the truth: I perceive it at once.”

“What follows then? These seas would gradually fill up to overflowing. The first little rivulet that trickled forth from their lipping fulness, would be the signal of their destruction. It would cut its channel over the ridge of the lofty mountain, tiny at first, but deepening and widening with each successive shower, until, after many years—ages, centuries, cycles perhaps—a great gap, such as this—” here Seguin pointed to the *Canon*, “and the dry plain behind it, would alone exist to puzzle the geologist.”

“And you think that the plains lying among the Andes and the Rocky Mountains, are the dry beds of seas?”

“I doubt it not. Seas formed after the upheaval of the ridges that barred them in—formed by rains from the ocean—at first shallow: then deepening, until they had risen to the level of their mountain barriers; and, as I have described, cut their way back again to the ocean.”

“But does not one of these seas still exist?”

“The great Salt Lake—it does. It lies north-west of us. Not only one, but a system of lakes, springs, and rivers—both salt

and fresh—and these have no outlet to the ocean! They are barred in by highlands and mountains, of themselves forming a complete geographical system.”

“Does not that destroy your theory?”

“No. The basin in which this phenomenon exists, is on a lower level than most of the desert plateaus. Its evaporating power is equal to the influx of its own rivers; and consequently, neutralizes their effect—that is to say, in its exchange of vapor with the ocean, it gives as much as it receives. This arises not so much from its low elevation, as from the peculiar dip of the mountains that guide the waters into its bosom. Place it in a colder position—*ceteris paribus*—and in time it would cut the canal for its own drainage. So with the Caspian Sea, the Aral, and the Dead. No, my friend; the existence of the Salt Lake supports my theory. Around its shores lies a fertile country: fertile from the quick returns of its own waters, moistening it with rain. It exists only to a limited extent; and cannot influence the whole region of the desert, which lies parched and sterile, on account of its great distance from the ocean.”

“But does not the vapor rising from the ocean float over the desert?”

“It *does*, I have said, to some extent, else there would be no rain here. Sometimes by extraordinary causes, such as high winds, it is carried into the heart of the continent in large masses. Then we have storms, and fearful ones too. But, generally, it is only the skirt of a cloud, so to speak, that reaches thus far; and that combined with the *proper* evaporation of the region itself—that is from its own springs and rivers—yields all the rain that falls upon it. Great bodies of vapor, rising from the Pacific and drifting eastward, first impinge upon the coast range, and there deposit their waters; or perhaps they are more highly heated, and, soaring above the tops of these mountains, travel farther. They will be intercepted a hundred miles farther on by the loftier ridges of the Sierra Nevada; and carried back, as it were captive, to the ocean, by the streams of the Sacramento and San Joaquin. It is only the skirt of these clouds—as I have termed it—that, soaring still higher, and escaping the attractive influence of the Nevada, floats on, and falls into the desert region. What then? No sooner has it fallen than it hurries back to the sea, by the Gila and Colorado, to rise again, and fertilize the slopes of the Nevada; while the fragment of some other cloud drifts its scanty supply over the arid uplands of the interior, to be spent in rain or snow upon the peaks of the Rocky Mountains. Hence the source of the rivers running east and west; and hence the oases—such as the “parks” that lie among these mountains. Hence the fertile valleys upon the Del Norte, and other streams that thinly meander through this central land.

Vapor-clouds, from the Atlantic, undergo a similar detention in crossing the Alleghany range; or cooling—after having circled a

great distance round the globe—descend into the valleys of the Ohio and Mississippi. From all sides of this great continent, as you approach its centre, fertility declines: and only from the want of water. The soil in many places, where there is scarcely a blade of grass to be seen, possesses all the elements of vegetation. So the Doctor here will tell you; he has analyzed it.”

“Ya! ya! dat ish true,” quietly affirmed the Doctor.

“There are many oases,” continued Seguin; “and, where water can be used to irrigate the soil, luxuriant vegetation is the consequence. You have observed this, no doubt, in travelling down the river; and such was the case in the old Spanish settlements on the Gila.”

“But why were these abandoned?” I inquired, never having heard any reason assigned for the desertion of these once flourishing colonies.

“Why!” echoed Seguin, with a peculiar energy; “why! Unless some other race than the Iberian take possession of these lands, the Apaché, the Navajo, and the Comanche—the conquered of Cortez and his conquerors—will yet drive the descendants of those very conquerors from the soil of Mexico! Look at Sonora and Chihuahua, half depopulated! Look at New Mexico—its citizens living by sufferance! living, as it were, to till the land, and feed the flocks for the support of their own enemies, who levy their black-mail by the year! But come! the sun tells us we must on. Come!”

“Mount! we can go through,” continued he. “There has been no rain lately, and the water is low, otherwise we should have fifteen miles of a ride over the mountain yonder. Keep close to the rocks! Follow me!”

And, with this admonition, he entered the Canon, followed by myself, Godé, and the Doctor

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SCALP-HUNTERS.

It was still early in the evening when we reached the camp—the camp of the Scalp-hunters! Our arrival was scarcely noticed. A single glance at us, as we rode in amongst the men, was all the recognition we received. No one rose from his seat or ceased his occupation. We were left to unsaddle our horses and dispose of them, as we best might!

I was wearied with the ride, having been so long unused to the saddle. I threw my blanket on the ground; and sat down, resting my back against the stump of a tree. I could have slept, but the strangeness of every thing around me excited my imagination; and with feelings of curiosity I looked and listened.

I should call the pencil to my aid to give you an idea of the scene; and that would but faintly illustrate it. A wilder and more picturesque *coup d'œil* never impressed human vision. It reminded me of pictures I had seen, representing the bivouacks of brigands under the dark pines of the Abruzzi.

I paint from a recollection that looks back over many years of adventurous life. I can give only the more salient points of the picture. The *petite détail* is forgotten; although, at that time, the minutest objects were things new and strange to my eye, and each of them for awhile fixed my attention. I afterwards grew familiar with them; and, hence, they are now in my memory, as a multitude of other things, indistinct from their very distinctness!

The camp was in a bend of the Del Norté—in a glade—surrounded by tall cottonwoods—whose smooth trunks rose vertically out of a thick underwood of palmettos, and Spanish bayonet. A

few tattered tents stood in the open ground: and there were skin lodges after the Indian fashion. But most of the hunters had made their shelter with a buffalo-robe stretched upon four upright poles. There were "lair" among the underwood, constructed of branches, and thatched with the palmetted leaves of the yuca, or with reeds brought from the adjacent river.

There were paths leading out in different directions, marked by openings in the foliage. Through one of these a green meadow was visible. Mules and mustangs, picketed on long trail-ropes, were clustered over it.

Through the camp were seen the saddles, bridles, and packs, resting upon stumps or hanging from the branches. Guns leaned against the trees, and rusted sabres hung suspended over the tents and lodges. Articles of camp furniture, such as pans, kettles, and axes, littered the ground in every direction.

Log fires were burning. Around them sat clusters of men. They were not seeking warmth, for it was not cold. They were roasting ribs of venison, or smoking old-fashioned pipes. Some were scouring their arms and accoutrements.

The accents of many languages fell upon my ear. I heard snatches of French, Spanish, English, and Indian. The exclamations were in character with the appearance of those who uttered them. "Hilloa, Dick! hang it, old hoss—what are ye 'bout?" "Sacre! enfant de Gârce!" "Carrambo!" "Pardieu, Monsieur!" "By the tarnal airthquake!" "Vaya! Hombre, Vaya!" "Carajo!" "By Gosh!" "Santissima Maria!" "Sac-r-re!"

It seemed as if the different nations had sent representatives, to contest the supremacy of their shibboleth.

I was struck with three groups. A particular language prevailed in each; and there was a homogeneousness about the costumes of the men composing each. That nearest me conversed in the Spanish language. They were Mexicans. I will describe the dress of one, as I remember it.

Calzoneros, of green velveteen. These are cut after the fashion of sailor-trousers—short-waist—tight round the hips, and wide at the bottoms, where they are strengthened by black leather, stamped and stitched ornamentally. The outer seams are split from hip to thigh, slashed with braid, and set with rows of silver castlestops. These seams are open—for the evening is warm—and underneath appear the *calzoncillos* of white muslin, hanging in wide folds around the ankles. The boot is of calf-skin, tanned, but not blackened. It is reddish, rounded at the toe, and carries a spur at least a pound in weight, with a rowel three inches in diameter! The spur is curiously fashioned, and fastened to the boot by straps of stamped leather. Little bells—*campanillas*—hang from the teeth of the rowels, and tinkle at the slightest motion of the foot! Look upward. The *calzoneros* are not braced, but fastened at the waist by a silken sash or scarf. It is scarlet.

It is passed several times around the body, and made fast behind; where the fringed ends hang gracefully over the left hip. There is no vest. A jacket of dark cloth, embroidered, and tightly fitting; short behind—*à la Grec*—leaving the shirt to puff out over the scarf. The shirt itself, with its broad collar and flowered front, exhibits the triumphant skill of some dark-eyed *poblana*. Over all this, is the broad-brimmed shadowy sombrero—a heavy hat of black glaze, with its thick band of silver bullion. There are tags of the same metal, stuck in the sides—giving it an appearance altogether unique. Over one shoulder is hanging—half folded—the picturesque *serapé*. A belt and pouch—an escopette upon which the hand is resting—a waist-belt with a pair of small pistols stuck under it—a long Spanish knife suspended obliquely across the left hip—complete the *tout ensemble* of him, whom I have chosen to describe.

It may answer as a characteristic of the dress of many of his companions, those of the group that was nearest me. There was variety in their habiliments, yet the national costume of Mexico was traceable in all. Some wore leathern calzoneros, with a spencer or jerkin of the same material, close both in front and behind. Some carried, instead of the pictured *serapé*, the blanket of the Navajoes, with its broad black stripes. Suspended from the shoulders of others hung the beautiful and graceful *manga*. Some were moccasoned; while a few of the inferior men wore the simple *guarache*—the sandal of the Aztecs.

The countenances of these men were swarth and savage-looking—their hair long, straight, and black as the wing of a crow; while both beard and moustache grew wildly over their faces. Fierce dark eyes gleamed under the broad brims of their hats. Few of them were men of high stature; yet there was a liteness in their bodies, that showed them to be capable of great activity. Their frames were well knit, and inured to fatigues and hardship. They were all, or nearly all, natives of the Mexican border—frontiers-men—who had often closed in deadly fight with the Indian foe. They were *ciboleros*, *vaqueros*, *rancheros*, *monteros*; men, who in their frequent association with the *mountain men*, the Gallic and Saxon hunters from the eastern plains, had acquired a degree of daring which by no means belongs to their own race. They were the chivalry of the Mexican frontier.

They smoked cigarritos—rolling them between their fingers in husks of maize. They played *monte* on their spread blankets, staking their tobacco. They cursed, and cried “Carajo,” when they lost, and thanks to the “*Santissima virgen*,” when the cards were pulled out in their favor!

Their language was a Spanish patois—their voices sharp and disagreeable.

At a short distance from these, was the second group that attracted my attention. The individuals composing this were

altogether different from the former. They were different in every essential point—in voice, dress, language, and physiognomy. Theirs was the Anglo-American face, at a glance. These were the trappers—the prairie hunters—the *mountain men*.

Let us again choose a type that may answer for a description of all.

He stands, leaning on his long, straight rifle, looking into the fire. He is six feet in his moccasins; and of a build that suggests the idea of strength and Saxon ancestry. His arms are like young oaks; and his hand, grasping the muzzle of his gun, is large, fleshless, and muscular. His cheek is broad and firm. It is partially covered by a bushy whisker, that meets over the chin and fringes all around the lips. It is neither fair nor dark; but of a dull, brown color, lighter around the mouth, where it has been bleached by the sun, "amber," and water. The eye is gray, or bluish-gray, small, and slightly crowded at the corner. It is well set, and rarely wanders. It seems to look *into* you, rather than *at* you. The hair is brown, and of a medium length (cut, no doubt, on his last visit to the trading post, or the settlements); and the complexion, although dark as that of a mulatto, is only so from tan. It was once fair—a blonde. The countenance is not unprepossessing. It might be styled handsome. Its whole expression is bold, but good-humored, and generous.

The dress of the individual described is of home manufacture—that is, of *his* home, the prairie and the wild mountain park—where the material has been bought by a bullet from his rifle. It is the work of his own hands—unless, indeed, he may be one, who, in his moments of lassitude, has shared his cabin with some Indian damsel, Sioux, Crow, or Cheyenne.

It consists of a hunting shirt of dressed deer-skin, smoked to the softness of a glove. Leggins, reaching to the waist, and moccasins of the same material—the latter soled with the *parflèche* of the buffalo. The shirt is belted at the waist, but open at the breast and throat, where it falls back into a graceful cape just covering the shoulders. Underneath is seen the undershirt, of finer material—the dressed skin of the antelope, or the fawn of the fallow deer. On his head is a racoon cap, with the face of the animal looking to the front; while the barred tail hangs like a plume drooping down to his left shoulder.

His accoutrements are, a bullet pouch made from the undressed skin of the mountain cat, and a huge crescent-shaped horn—upon which he has carved many a strange souvenir. His arms consist of a long knife, a bowie, and a heavy pistol, carefully secured by a holster to the leathern belt around his waist. Add to this a rifle nearly five feet long, taking ninety to the pound; and so straight, that the line of the barrel scarcely deflects from that of the butt!

But little attention has been paid to ornament in either his dress, arms, or equipments; and yet there is a gracefulness in

the hang of his tunic-like shirt; a stylishness about the fringing of the cape and leggins; and a jauntiness in the set of that coon-skin cap, that shows the wearer to be not altogether unmindful of his personal appearance. A small pouch or case, neatly embroidered with stained porcupine quills, hangs upon his breast.

At intervals, he contemplates this with a pleased and complacent look. It is his pipeholder—a love-token from some dark eyed, dark-haired damsel, no doubt, like himself, a denizen of the wild wilderness. Such is the *tout ensemble* of a mountain trapper.

There were many around him whom I have described, almost similarly attired and equipped. Some wore slouch hats of grayish felt; and some catskin caps. Some had hunting shirts bleached to a brighter hue, and broided with gayer colors. Others looked more tattered and patched, and smoky; yet in the costume of all there was enough of character to enable you to class them. There was no possibility of mistaking the regular “*mountain man*.”

The third group that attracted my attention, was at a greater distance from the spot I occupied. I was filled with curiosity, not to say astonishment, on perceiving that they *were Indians!*

“Can they be prisoners?” thought I. “No; they are not bound. There are no signs of captivity, either in their looks or gestures; and yet they are Indians! can *they* belong to the band, fighting against —?”

As I sat conjecturing, a hunter passed near me.

“Who are these Indians?” I asked, indicating the group.

“Delawares—some Shawnee.”

These then were the celebrated Delawares—descendants of that great tribe, which on the Atlantic shores first gave battle to the pale-faced invader. Theirs has been a wonderful history. War their school, war their worship, war their pastime, war their profession! They are now but a remnant. Their story will soon be ended!

I rose up; and approached them with a feeling of interest. Some of them were sitting around the fire, smoking out of curiously carved pipes of the red claystone. Others strode back and forth, with that majestic gait for which the “forest” Indian has been so much celebrated. There was a silence among them, that contrasted strangely with the jabbering kept up by their Mexican allies. An occasional question put in a deep-toned sonorous voice—a short but emphatic reply—a guttural grunt—a dignified nod—a gesture with the hand—and thus they conversed, as they filled their pipe-bowls with the *kini-kin-ik*, and passed the valued instruments from one to another.

I stood gazing upon these stoical sons of the forest, with emotions stronger than curiosity; as one contemplates for the first time an object of which he has heard and read strange accounts. The history of their wars and their wanderings was fresh in my

memory. Before me were the actors themselves—or types of them—in all their truthful reality, in all their wild picturesqueness. These were the men who, driven from their homes, by the Atlantic border, yielded only to fate—to the destiny of their race. Crossing the Appalachian range—they had fought their way from home to home—down the steep sides of the Alleghany—along the wooded banks of the Ohio, into the heart of the “Bloody Ground.” Still the pale face followed on their track, and drove them onward—onward to the setting sun. Red wars—Punic faith—broken treaties—year after year, thinned their ranks. Still, disdaining to live near their white conquerors, they pushed on—fighting their way through tribes of their own race and color, thrice their numbers! The forks of the Osage became their latest resting-place. Here the usurper promised to guarantee them a home, to be theirs to all time. The concession came too late. War and wandering had grown to be part of their natures; and with a scornful pride, they disdained the peaceful tillage of the soil. The remnant of their tribe was collected on the Osage; but in one season it had disappeared! The braves and young men wandered away, leaving only the old, the women, and the worthless in their allotted home! Where have they gone? Where are they now? He who would find the Delawares, must seek them on the broad prairies—in the mountain parks—in the haunts of the bear and the beaver—the bighorn and the buffalo. There he may find them, in scattered bands, leagued with their ancient enemies the whites, or alone; trapping, hunting, fighting the Yuta or Rapaho, the Crow or Cheyenne, the Navajo and the Apaché.

I stood gazing upon the group, with feelings of profound interest—upon their features, and their picturesque habiliments. Though no two of them were dressed exactly alike, there was a similarity about the dress of all. Most of them wore hunting shirts, not made of deerskin—like those of the whites—but of calico, printed in bright patterns. This dress, handsomely fashioned and fringed, under the accoutrements of the Indian warrior, presented a striking appearance. But that which chiefly distinguished the costumes of both the Delaware and Shawano, from that of their white allies, was the head-dress. This was, in fact, a turban, formed by binding the head with a scarf or kerchief of a brilliant color—such as may be seen on the dark creoles of Hayti. In the group before me, no two of these turbans were alike, yet they were all of a similar character. The finest were those made by the chequered kerchiefs of Madras. Plumes surmounted them, of colored feathers, from the wing of the war eagle, or the blue plumage of the gruya.

For the rest of their costume, they wore deerskin leggins and moccasins, nearly similar to those of the trappers. The leggins of some were ornamented by scalp locks along the outer seam—exhibiting a dark history of the wearer’s prowess! I noticed that

their moccasins were peculiar—differing altogether from those worn by the Indians of the prairies. They were seamed up the fronts, without braiding or ornament; and gathered into a double row of plaits.

The arms and equipments of these warrior men were like those of the white hunters. They have long since discarded the bow; and in the management of the rifle, most of them can “draw a bead,” and hit “plum centre,” with any of their mountain associates. In addition to the firelock and knife, I noticed that they still carried the ancient weapon of their race—the fearful tomahawk.

I have described three characteristic groups that struck me on glancing over the camp ground. There were individuals belonging to neither; and others partaking of the character of one or all. There were Frenchmen—Canadian voyageurs—strays of the North-west company—wearing white capotes; and chattering, dancing, and singing their boat songs with all the *esprit* of their race. There were Pueblos—Indios manzos—clad in their ungraceful tilmas—and rather serving than associating with those around them. There were mulattoes, too; and negroes of a jetty blackness, from the plantations of Louisiana—who had exchanged for this free roving life, the twisted “cow-skin” of the overseer. There were tattered uniforms—showing the deserters, who had wandered from some frontier post, into this remote region. There were Kanakas from the Sandwich Isles, who had crossed the deserts from California. There were men apparently of every hue, and clime, and tongue, here assembled—drawn together by the accident of life—by the instinct of adventure—all more or less strange individuals of the strangest band it has ever been my lot to witness—the band of the SCALP-HUNTERS!

CHAPTER XX.

SHARP-SHOOTING.

I HAD returned to my blanket, and was about to stretch myself upon it, when the whoop of a "gruya" drew my attention. Looking up, I saw one of these birds flying towards the camp. It was coming through a break in the trees that opened from the river. It flew low, and tempted a shot with its broad wings, and slow lazy flight.

A report rang upon the air! One of the Mexicans had fired his escopette; but the bird flew on, plying its wings with more energy, as if to bear itself out of reach.

There was a laugh from the trappers, and a voice cried out—

"Yur cussed fool! d' yur think 'ee kud hit a spread blanket wi' that beetle-shaped blunderbox? Pish!"

I turned to see who had delivered this odd speech. Two men were poising their rifles, bringing them to bear upon the bird. One was the young hunter whom I have described. The other was an Indian whom I had not seen before.

The cracks were simultaneous; and the crane, dropping its long neck, came whirling down among the trees, where it caught upon a high branch, and remained.

From their position, neither party knew that the other had fired. A tent was between them; and the two reports had seemed as one. A trapper cried out—

"Well done, Garey! Lord help the thing that's afore old Kilbar's muzzle, when you squints through her hind sights."

The Indian just then stepped round the tent. Hearing this side speech, and perceiving the smoke still oozing from the muzzle of the young hunter's gun, he turned to the latter with the interrogation—

“Did *you* fire, sir?”

This was said in well accentuated and most un-Indian like English, which would have drawn my attention to the man, had not his singularly imposing appearance rivetted me already.

“Who is he?” I inquired from one near me.

“Don’t know—fresh arriv,” was the short answer.

“Do you mean that he is a stranger here?”

“Jest so. He kumd in thar awhile agone. Don’t b’lieve anybody knows him. I guess the captain does; I seed them shake hands.”

I looked at the Indian with increasing interest. He seemed a man of about thirty years of age, and not much under seven feet in height! He was proportioned like an Apollo; and, on this account appeared smaller than he actually was. His features were of the Roman type; and his fine forehead, his aquiline nose and broad jaw-bone, gave him the appearance of talent, as well as firmness and energy. He was dressed in a hunting shirt, leggings and moccasins; but all these differed from any thing worn either by the hunters, or their Indian allies. The shirt itself was made out of the dressed hide of the red deer; but differently prepared to that used by the trappers. It was bleached almost to the whiteness of a kid glove! The breast—unlike theirs—was close, and beautifully embroidered with stained porcupine quills. The sleeves were similarly ornamented; and the cape and skirts were trimmed with the soft snow-white fur of the ermine. A row of entire skins of that animal hung from the skirt border, forming a fringe both graceful and costly. But the most singular feature about this man was his hair. It fell loosely over his shoulders, and swept the ground as he walked! It could not have been less than seven feet in length. It was black, glossy, and luxuriant; and reminded me of the tails of those great Flemish horses, I had seen, in the funeral carriages of London.

He wore upon his head the war-eagle bonnet, with its full circle of plumes—the finest triumph of savage taste. This magnificent head-dress added to the majesty of his appearance.

A white buffalo robe hung from his shoulders, with all the graceful draping of a toga. Its silky fur corresponded to the color of his dress, and contrasted strikingly with his own dark tresses.

There were other ornaments about his person. His arms and accoutrements were shining with metallic brightness; and the stock and butt of his rifle were richly inlaid with silver.

I have been thus minute in my description, as the first appearance of this man impressed me with a picture that can never be effaced from my memory. He was the *beau ideal* of a picturesque and romantic savage; and yet there was nothing savage either in his speech or bearing. On the contrary, the interrogation which he had just addressed to the trapper was put in the politest manner. The reply was not so courteous.

“Did I fire? Didn’t ye hear a crack? Didn’t ye see the thing fall? Look yonder!”

Garcy, as he spoke, pointed up to the bird.

“We must have fired simultaneously.”

As the Indian said this, he appealed to his gun, which was still smoking at the muzzle.

“Look hyar, Injun! whether we fired symultainyously, or extraneously, or cattawampously, aint the flapping o’ a beaver’s tail to me; but I tuk sight on that bird; I hut that bird; and ’twar my bullet brought the thing down.”

“I think I must have hit it, too,” replied the Indian, modestly.

“That’s like, with that ar spangled gimerack,” said Garcy looking disdainfully at the other’s gun, and then proudly at his own brown weather-beaten piece—which he had just wiped, and was about to reload.

“Gimerack or no,” answered the Indian, “she sends a bullet straighter and farther, than any piece I have hitherto met with. I’ll warrant she has sent hers through the body of the crane.”

“Look hyar, mister: for I s’pose we must call a gentleman ‘mister’ who speaks so fine an’ looks so fine, tho’ he be’s an Injun; its mighty easy to settle who hut the bird. That thing’s a fifty, or tharabout’s: Kilbar’s a ninety. ’Taint hard to tell which has plugged the varmint. We’ll soon see; and so saying, the hunter stepped off toward the tree, on which hung the gruya, high up.

“How are ye to get it down?” cried one of the men, who had stepped forward to witness the settlement of this curious dispute.

There was no reply, for every one saw that Garcy was poisoning his rifle for a shot. The crack followed: and the branch, shivered by his bullet, bent downward under the weight of the gruya! But the bird, caught in a double fork, still stuck fast on the broken limb.

A murmur of approbation followed the shot. These were men not accustomed to hurrah loudly at a trivial incident.

The Indian now approached, having reloaded his piece. Taking aim, he struck the branch at the shattered point, cutting it clean from the tree! The bird fell to the ground, amidst expressions of applause from the spectators, but chiefly from the Mexican and Indian hunters. It was at once picked up and examined. *Two bullets had passed through its body!* Either would have killed it.

A shadow of unpleasant feeling was visible on the face of the young trapper. In the presence of so many hunters of every nation, to be thus equalled—beaten—in the use of his favorite weapon—and by an “Injun”—still worse by one of “them ar gingerbread guns.” The mountain men have no faith in an ornamented stock or a big bore. Spangled rifles, they say, are like

spangled razors, made for selling to "greenhorns." It was evident, however, that the strange Indian's rifle had been made to shoot as well.

It required all the strength of nerve which the trapper possessed, to conceal his chagrin. Without saying a word, he commenced wiping out his gun, with that stoical calmness peculiar to men of his calling. I observed that he proceeded to load with more than usual care. It was evident that he would not rest satisfied with the trial already made, but would either beat the "Injun" or be himself "whipped into shucks." So he declared, in a muttered speech to his comrades.

His piece was soon loaded; and, swinging her to the hunter's carry, he turned to the crowd—now collecting from all parts of the camp.

"Thar's one kind o' shootin'," said he, "that's jest as easy as fallin' off a log. Any man kin do it, as kin look straight through hind-sights. But then thar's another kind, that ain't so easy; it needs narve."

Here the trapper paused; and looked toward the Indian, who was also re-loading.

"Look hyar, stranger!" continued he, addressing the latter. "Have ye got a cummarade on the ground, as knows yer shootin'?"

The Indian, after a moment's hesitation answered "Yes."

"Kin yer cummarade depend on your shot?"

"Oh! I think so. Why do you wish to know that?"

"Why—I'm a goin' to show ye a shot we sometimes practise at Bent's Fort, jest to tickle the greenhorns. 'Taint much o' a shot, nayther; but it tries the narves a little, I reckon. Hoy! Rube!"

"D—n yur! What do 'ee want!"

This was spoken in an energetic and angry-like voice, that turned all eyes to the quarter whence it proceeded. At the first glance, there seemed to be no one in that direction. In looking more carefully among the logs and stumps, an individual was discovered seated by one of the fires. It would have been difficult to tell that it was a human body, had not the arms at the moment been in motion. The back was turned toward the crowd, and the head had disappeared, sunk forward over the fire. The object, from where we were standing, looked more like the stump of a cottonwood, dressed in dirt-colored buckskin, than the body of a human being. In getting nearer, and round to the front of it, it was seen to be a man—though a very curious one—holding a long rib of deer-meat in both hands, which he was polishing with a very poor set of teeth.

The whole appearance of this individual was odd and striking. His dress—if dress it could be called—was simple as it was savage. It consisted of what might have once been a hunting shirt, but which now looked more like a leathern bag with the bottom ripped open, and sleeves sewed into the sides. It was of a dirty brown color, wrinkled at the hollow of the arms, patched around

the armpits, and greasy all over: it was fairly "caked" with dirt! There was no attempt at either ornament or fringe. There had been a cape: but this had evidently been drawn upon, from time to time, for patches and other uses, until scarcely a vestige of it remained. The leggings and moccasins were on a par with the shirt; and seemed to have been manufactured out of the same hide. They too were dirt-brown, patched, wrinkled, and greasy. They did not meet each other, but left a piece of the ankle bare; and that also was dirt-brown, like the buckskin. There was no undershirt, vest, or other garment to be seen, with the exception of a close-fitting cap, which had once been catskin; but the hair was all worn off it—leaving a greasy, leathery-looking surface, that corresponded well with the other parts of the dress. Cap, shirt, leggings, and moccasins, looked as if they had never been stripped off, since the day they were first tried on; and that might have been many a year ago. The shirt was open—displaying the naked breast and throat—and these, as well as the face, hands, and ankles, had been tanned by the sun, and smoked by the fire to the hue of rusty copper. The whole man—clothes and all—looked as if he had been smoked on purpose!

His face bespoke a man of sixty. The features were sharp and somewhat aquiline; and the small eye was dark, quick, and piercing. His hair was black and cut short. His complexion had been naturally brunette, though there was nothing of the Frenchman or Spaniard in his physiognomy. He was more likely of the black Saxon breed.

As I looked at this man, (for I had walked towards him, prompted by some instinct of curiosity,) I began to fancy there was a strangeness about him, independent of the oddness of his attire. There seemed to be something peculiar about his head—something wanting. What was it? I was not long in conjecture. When fairly in front of him, I saw what was wanting. *It was his ears!*

This discovery impressed me with a feeling akin to awe. There is something awful in a man without his ears. It suggests some horrid drama—some terrible scene of cruel vengeance. It suggests the idea of crime committed, and punishment inflicted.

These thoughts were wandering through my mind, when all at once I remembered a remark which Seguin had made on the previous night. This, then, thought I, is the person of whom he spoke. My mind was satisfied.

After making answer as above, the old fellow sat for some time, with his head between his knees—chewing, mumbling, and growling, like a lean old wolf, angry at being disturbed in his meal.

"Come hyar, Rube! I want ye a bit," continued Garey, in a tone of half entreaty.

"And so 'ee will want me a bit; this child don't m'rc a d--d peg, till he has cleaned this hyar rib—he don't—new!"

"Dog-gone it man! make haste then," and the impatient trapper dropped the butt of his rifle to the ground; and stood waiting in sullen silence.

After chewing, and mumbling, and growling a few minutes longer, old Rube—for that was the name by which the leathery sinner was known—slowly erected his lean carcase; and came walking up to the crowd.

"What do 'ee want, Billee?" he inquired, going up to the trapper.

"I want ye to hold this," answered Garey, offering him a round white shell, about the size of a watch; a species, of which there were many strewed over the ground.

"Is't a bet, boyee?"

"No, it is not."

"Aint wastin' yur powder, ar yur?"

"I've been beat shootin'," replied the trapper in an under tone, "by that ar Injun."

The old man looked over to where the strange Indian was standing, erect and majestic, in all the pride of his plumage. There was no appearance of triumph or swagger about him, as he stood leaning on his rifle, in an attitude at once calm and dignified.

It was plain from the way old Rube surveyed him, that he had seen him before—though not in that camp. After passing his eyes over him from head to foot—and there resting them a moment—a low murmur escaped his lips, which ended abruptly in the word "Coco."

"A Coco, do ye think?" inquired the other with apparent interest.

"Are 'ee blind, Billee? Don't 'ee see his moccasons?"

"Yes, you're right, but I was in thar nation two years ago. I seed no sich man as that."

"He w'ant there."

"Whar then?"

"Whur thur's no great show o' redskins. He may shoot well; he did onceest on a time—plum centre."

"You knew him, did ye?"

"O-ee-ees. Onceest. Putty squaw—hansum gal. Whur do 'ee want me to go?"

I thought that Garey seemed inclined to carry the conversation farther. There was an evident interest in his manner, when the other mentioned the "squaw." Perhaps he had some tender recollection; but, seeing the other preparing to start off, he pointed to an open glade, that stretched eastward and simply answered "Sixty."

"Take care o' my claws, d' yur hear! Them Injuns has made em seace; this child can't spare another."

The old trapper said this, with a flourish of his right hand. I noticed that the little finger had been chopped off!

"Never fear, old hoss!" was the reply; and, at this, the smoky carcass moved away, with a slow and regular pace, that showed he was measuring the yards.

When he had stepped the sixtieth yard, he faced about, and stood erect—placing his heels together. He then extended his right arm, raising it until his hand was on a level with his shoulder, and, holding the shell in his fingers, flat side to the front, shouted back—

"Now, Bill-ee shoot, and be d——d to yur!"

The shell was slightly concave—the concavity turned to the front. The thumb and finger reached half around the circumference—so that a part of the edge was hidden; and the surface, turned towards the marksman, was not larger than the dial of a common watch!

This was a fearful sight. It is one not so common among the mountain men, as travellers would have you believe. The feat proves the marksman's skill—first, if successful, by showing the strength and steadiness of his nerves: secondly, by the confidence which the other reposes in it, thus declared by stronger testimony than any oath. In any case, the feat of holding the mark is at least equal to that of hitting it. There are many hunters willing to risk taking the shot, but few who care to hold the shell.

It was a fearful sight; and my nerves tingled as I looked on. Many others felt as I. No one interfered. They were few present who would have dared—even had these two men been making preparation to fire at each other! Both were "men of mark" among their comrades—trappers of the first class.

Garey, drawing a long breath, planted himself firmly—the heel of his left foot opposite to, and some inches in advance of the hollow of his right. Then, jerking up his gun, and throwing the barrel across his left palm, cried out to his comrade:

"Steady, old bone and sinner! hyar's at ye!"

The words were scarcely out, when the gun was levelled. There was a moment's deathlike silence—all eyes looking to the mark. Then came the crack—and the shell was seen to fly, shivered into fifty fragments! There was a cheer from the crowd. Old Rube stooped to pick up one of the pieces; and, after examining it for a moment, shouted in a loud voice:

"Plum centre, by G—d!"

The young trapper had, in effect, hit the mark in the very centre—as the blue stain of the bullet testified.

CHAPTER XXI.

A FEAT A LA TELL.

ALL eyes are turned upon the strange Indian. During the scene described, he has stood silent and calmly looking on. His eye now wanders over the ground, apparently in search of an object.

A small convolvulus—known as the “prairie gourd,”—is lying at his feet. It is globe-shaped, about the size of an orange, and not unlike one in color. He stoops and takes it up. He seems to examine it with great care, balancing it upon his hand, as though he was calculating its weight!

What does he intend to do with this? Will he fling it up, and send his bullet through it in the air? What else?

His motions are watched in silence. Nearly all the scalp-hunters—sixty or seventy—are on the ground. Seguin, only, with the Doctor and a few men, is engaged some distance off pitching a tent. Garey stands upon one side, slightly elated with his triumph; but not without feelings of apprehension that he may yet be beaten. Old Rube has gone back to the fire; and is roasting another rib.

The gourd seems to satisfy the Indian—for whatever purpose he intends it. A long piece of bone—the thigh joint of the war-eagle—hangs suspended over his breast. It is curiously carved, and pierced with holes like a musical instrument. It is one.

He places this to his lips—covering the holes with his fingers. He sounds three notes—oddly inflected—but loud and sharp. He drops the instrument again, and stands looking eastward into

the woods. The eyes of all present are bent in the same direction. The hunters, influenced by a mysterious curiosity, remain silent; or speak only in low mutterings.

Like an echo, the three notes are answered by a similar signal! It is evident that the Indian has a comrade in the woods; yet not one of the band seems to know aught of him; or his comrade. Yes—one does. It is Rube.

“Look’ee hyur, boyees!” cries he, squinting over his shoulders. I’ll stake this rib again a griskin o’ poor bull, that ’eel see the puttiest gal as ’ee ever set yur eyes on.”

There is no reply—we are gazing too intently for the expected arrival.

A rustling is heard, as of some one parting the bushes—the tread of a light foot—the snapping of twigs. A bright object appears among the leaves. Some one is coming through the underwood. It is a woman!

It is an Indian girl, attired in a singular and picturesque costume.

She steps out of the bushes; and comes boldly towards the crowd. All eyes are turned upon her, with looks of wonder and admiration. We scan her face and figure and her striking attire.

She is dressed not unlike the Indian himself; and there is a resemblance in other respects. The tunic worn by the girl is of finer materials—of fawn skin. It is richly trimmed; and worked with split quills, stained to a variety of bright colors. It hangs to the middle of the thighs, ending in a fringe work of shells, that tinkle as she moves.

Her limbs are wrapped in leggings of scarlet cloth, fringed like the tunic and reaching to the ankles, where they meet the flaps of her moccasins. These last are white, embroidered with stained quills, and fitting closely to her small feet.

A belt of wampum closes the tunic on her waist—exhibiting the globular developments of a full-grown bosom, and the undulating outlines of a womanly person. Her head-dress is similar to that worn by her companion, but smaller and lighter; and her hair, like his, hangs loosely down, reaching almost to the ground! Her neck, throat, and part of her bosom are nude, and clustered over with bead-strings of various colors.

The expression of her countenance is high and noble. Her eye is oblique. The lips meet with a double curve, and the throat is full and rounded. Her complexion is Indian; but a crimson hue struggling through the brown upon her cheek, gives that pictured expression to her countenance, that may be observed in the queen of the West Indies.

She is a girl, though full grown, and boldly developed—a type of health and savage beauty.

As she approaches, the men murmur their admiration. There are hearts beating under hunting shirts, that rarely deign to dream of the charms of woman.

I am struck, at this moment, with the appearance of the young trapper—Garey. His face has fallen—the blood has forsaken his cheeks—his lips are white and compressed, and dark rings have formed around his eyes! They express anger; but there is still another meaning in them.

Is it jealousy? Yes!

He has stepped behind one of his comrades, as if he did not wish to be seen. One hand is playing involuntarily with the handle of his knife! The other grasps the barrel of his gun, as though he would crush it between his fingers!

The girl comes up. The Indian hands her the gourd, muttering some words in an unknown tongue—unknown at least to me. She takes it without making any reply, and walks off toward the spot, where Rube had stood—which has been pointed out to her by her companion.

She reaches the tree; and halts in front of it—facing round, as the trapper had done.

There was something so dramatic, so theatrical, in the whole proceeding, that, up to the present time, we had all stood waiting for the *denouement* in silence. Now we knew what it was to be; and the men began to talk.

“He’s a’goin’ to shoot the gourd from the hand of the gal,” suggested a hunter.

“No great shot after all,” added another, and indeed this was the silent opinion of most on the ground.

“Wagh! it don’t beat Garey if he diz hit it,” exclaimed a third.

What was our amazement, at seeing the girl fling off her plumed bonnet, place the gourd upon her head, fold her arms over her bosom, and stand, fronting us as calm and immobile as if she had been carved upon the tree!

There was a murmur in the crowd. The Indian was raising his rifle to take aim, when a man rushed forward to prevent him. It was Garey!

“No, yer don’t! No!” cried he, clutching the levelled rifle; “she’s deceived *me*, that’s plain; but I won’t see the gal that ~~once~~ loved me, or said she did, in the trap that-a-way. No! Bill Carey ain’t a’goin’ to stand by, and see it.”

“What is this?” shouted the Indian in a voice of thunder. “Who dares to interrupt me?”

“I dares,” replied Garey. “She’s your’n now, I suppose. You may take her whar ye like; and take this too,” continued he, tearing off the embroidered pipe case, and flinging it at the Indian’s feet; “but ye’re not a’goin’ to shoot her down, whiles I stand by.”

“By what right do you interrupt me? My sister is not afraid, and—”

“Your *sister*!”

"Yes—my sister."

"And is yon girl your sister?" eagerly inquired Garey, *his* manner, and the expression of his countenance all at once changing.

"She is. I have said, she is."

"And are you El Sol?"

"I am."

"I ask your pardon; but—"

"I pardon you. Let me proceed!"

"O, sir, do not—no! no! She is your sister, and I know you have the right, but thar's no needcessity. I have heerd of your shootin'. I give in you kin beat me. For God's sake, do not risk it—as you care for her, do not!"

"There is no risk. I will show you."

"No, no. If you must then, let me! I will hold it. O, let me!" stammered the young hunter in tones of entreaty.

"Hilloo, Billee! What's the dratted rumpus?" cried Rube, coming up. "Hang it, man! let's see the shot. I've heern o' it afore. Don't be skeert, ye fool! he'll do it like a breeze; *he* will!"

And as the old trapper said this, he caught his comrade by the arm, and slung him round out of the Indian's way.

The girl, daring all this, had stood still—seemingly not knowing the cause of the interruption. Garey's back was turned to her, and the distance—with two years of separation—doubtless prevented her from recognizing him.

Before Garey could turn to interpose himself, the rifle was at the Indian's shoulder and levelled! His finger was on the trigger, and his eye glanced through the sights. It was too late to interfere. Any attempt at that might bring about the dreaded result. The hunter, as he turned, saw this; and, halting in his tracks, stood straining and silent.

It was a moment of terrible suspense to all of us—a moment of intense emotions. The silence was profound. Every breath seemed suspended. Every eye was fixed on the yellow object, not larger, I have said, than an orange. O God! will the shot never come?

It came. The flash—the crack—the stream of fire—the wild hurrah—the forward rush—were all simultaneous things. We saw the shivered globe fly off. The girl was still upon her feet—she was safe!

I ran with the rest. The smoke for a moment blinded me. I heard the shrill notes of the Indian whistle. I looked before me. *The girl had disappeared.*

We ran to the spot where she had stood. We heard a rustling in the underwood—a departing footstep. We knew it was she; but, guided by an instinct of delicacy, and a knowledge that it would be contrary to the wish of her brother, no one followed her.

We found the fragments of the calabash, strewed over the ground. We found the leaden mark upon them. The bullet it-

self was buried in the bark of the tree ; and one of the hunters commenced digging it out with the point of his bowie.

As we turned to go back, we saw that the Indian had walked away, and now stood chatting easily and familiarly with Seguin.

As we re-entered the camp-ground, I observed Garey stoop and pick up a shining object. It was the *gage d'amour*, which he carefully re-adjusted around his neck, in its wonted position.

From his look, and the manner in which he handled it, it was plain that he now regarded the *souvenir* with more reverence than ever.

CHAPTER XXII.

A FEAT A LA TAIL.

I HAD fallen into a sort of reverie. My mind was occupied with the incidents I had just witnessed, when a voice—which I recognized as that of old Rube—roused me from my abstraction.

“Lookee hyur, boyees! ’Taint of’n as ole Rube wastes lead, but I’ll beat that Injun’s shot, or ’ee may cut my ears off.”

A loud laugh hailed this allusion of the trapper to his ears; which, as we have observed, were already gone; and so closely had they been trimmed, that nothing remained for either knife or shears to accomplish.

“How will you do it, Rube?” cried one of the hunters; “shoot the mark off a yer own head?”

“I’ll let ’ee see if ’ee wait,” replied Rube, stalking up to a tree, and taking from its rest a long heavy rifle, which he proceeded to wipe out with care.

The attention of all was now turned upon the manœuvres of the old trapper. Conjecture was busy as to his designs. What feat could he perform that would eclipse the one just witnessed? No one could guess.

“I’ll beat it,” continued he, muttering as he loaded his piece, “or ’ee may chop the little finger off ole Rube’s right paw.”

Another peal of laughter followed, as all perceived that this was the finger that was wanting.

“’Eees,” continued he, looking at the faces that were around him, “’ee may scalp me if I don’t.”

This last remark elicited fresh roars of laughter; for although the catskin was closely drawn upon his head, all present knew that old Rube was minus his scalp!

"But how are ye goin' to do it? tell us that, old hoss!"

"'Ee see this, do 'ee?" asked the trapper, holding out a small fruit of the cactus pitahaya, which he had just plucked, and cleaned of its spikelets.

"Ay, ay," cried several voices, in reply.

"'Ee do, do 'ec? Wal; 'ee see 'taint half as big as the Injun's squash. 'Ee see that do 'ee?"

"Oh! sartinly; any fool can see that."

"Wal; s'pose I plug it at sixty—plum center?"

"Waugh!" cried several, with shrugs of disappointment.

"Stick it on a pole, and any o' us can do that," said the principal speaker. "Here's Barney could knock it off with his owld musket. Couldn't you, Barney?"

"In trath, an' I could thry," answered a very small man, leaning upon a musket, and who was dressed in a tattered uniform, that had once been sky blue. I had already noticed this individual with some curiosity, partly struck with his peculiar costume, but more particularly on account of the redness of his hair, which was the *reddest* I had ever seen. It bore the marks of a severe barrack discipline—that is, it had been shaved, and was now growing out of Barney's little round head short and thick, and coarse in the grain, and of the color of a scraped carrot. There was no possibility of mistaking Barney's nationality. In trapper phrase, any fool could have told that.

What had brought such an individual to such a place? I asked this question, and was soon enlightened. He had been a soldier in a frontier post—one of uncle Sam's "Sky-blues." He had got tired of pork and pipe clay, accompanied with a too liberal allowance of the "hide." In a word, Barney was a deserter. What his name was, I know not, but he went under the appellation of O'Cork—Barney O'Cork.

A laugh greeted his answer to the hunter's question.

"Any o' us," continued the speaker, could plug the persimmon that a way. But thar's a mighty heap o' diff'rence when you squints thro' hind sights at a gal like yon."

"Ye're right, Dick," said another hunter, "it makes a feller feel queery about the joints."

"Hely vistment! An' wasn't she a raal beauty?" exclaimed the little Irishman, with an earnestness in his manner that set the trappers roaring again.

"Pish!" cried Rube, who had now finished loading, "yu'r a set o' channerin fools—that's what 'ee ar. Who palavered about a post? I've got an ole squaw as well 's the Injun. She'll hold the thing for this child—*she* will."

"Squaw! You a squaw?"

"Yes, hoss; I has a squaw, I wudn't swop for two o' hisn. I'll make tracks, an' fetch the old 'oman. Shet up yur heads, an' wait, will ye?"

So saying, the smoky old sinner shouldered his rifle, and walked off.

I, in common with others—late comers, who were strangers to Rube—began to think that he had an “old ’oman.” There were no females to be seen about the encampment, but perhaps she was hid away in in the woods. The trappers, however, who knew him, seemed to understand that the old fellow had some trick in his brain; and that, it appeared, was no new thing for him.

We were not kept long in suspense. In a few minutes, Rube was seen returning; and by his side the “old ’oman,” in the shape of a long, lank, bare-ribbed, high-boned mustang, that turned out, on close inspection, to be a mare! This, then, was Rube’s squaw; and she was not at all unlike him, excepting the ears. *She* was long-eared, in common with all her race—the same as that upon which Quixote charged the windmill. The long ears caused her to look foolish—but it was only in appearance—she was a pure mustang when you examined her attentively. She seemed to have been, at an earlier period, of that dun yellow, known as “clay-bank”—a common color among Mexican horses—but time and scars had somewhat metamorphosed her; and gray hairs predominated all over, particularly about the head and neck. These parts were covered with a dirty grizzle of mixed hues. She was badly wind-broken; and at stated intervals of several minutes each, her back heaved up with a jerk—from the spasmodic action of the lungs—as though she was trying to kick with her hind legs, and couldn’t. She was as thin as a rail, and carried her head below the level of her shoulders; but there was something in the twinkle of her solitary eye—for she had but one—that told you she had no intention of giving up for a long time to come. She was evidently “game to the back bone.”

Such was the “old ’oman” Rube had promised to fetch; and she was greeted by a loud laugh as he led her up.

“Now, lookee hyur, boyees,” said he, halting in front of the crowd. “’Ee may larf, an’ gabble, and grin till yur sick in the guts—yur may! but this child’s a gwine to take the shine out of that Injun’s shot—he is, or bust a tryin.”

Several of the bystanders remarked that that was likely enough, and that they only waited to see in what manner it was to be done. No one who knew him doubted old Rube to be—as in fact he was, one of the very best marksmen in the mountains—fully equal, perhaps, to the Indian; but it was the style and circumstances which had given such *eclat* to the shot of the latter. It was not every day that a beautiful girl could be found to stand fire as the squaw had done; and it was not every hunter who would have ventured to fire at a mark so placed. The strength of the feat lay in its newness and peculiarity. The hunters had often fired at the mark held in one another’s hands. There were few who would like to carry it on their head. How then

was Rube to "take the shine out of that Injun's shot?" This was the question that each was asking the other; and which was at length put directly to Rube himself.

"Shet up yur meat-traps," answered he, "an I'll show 'ee. In the fust place, then, 'ee all see that this hyur prickly ain't more 'n hef size o' the squash!"

"Yes, sartinly," answered several voices. "That wur one suckumstance in his favor. Wa'nt it?"

"It wur! it wur!"

"Wal, hyur's another. The Injun, 'ee see, shot his mark off o' the head. Now, this child's a-gwine to knock hisn off o' the tail. Kud your Injun do that? Eh, boyees?"

"No, no!"

"Do that beat him, or do it not, then?"

"It beats him!—"It does!"—"Far better!"—"Hooray!" vociferated several voices amidst yells of laughter. No one dissented, as the hunters, pleased with the joke, were anxious to see it carried through.

Rube did not detain them long. Leaving his rifle in the hands of his friend Garey, he led the old mare up towards the spot that had been occupied by the Indian girl. Reaching this, he halted.

We all expected to see him turn the animal, with her side towards us, thus leaving her body out of range. It soon became evident that this was not the old fellow's intention. It would have spoiled the look of the thing had he done so; and that idea was no doubt running in his mind.

Choosing a place where the ground chanced to be slightly hollowed out, he led the mustang forward, until her fore feet rested in the hollow. The tail was thus thrown above the body.

Having squared her hips to the camp, he whispered something at her head; and going round to the hind quarters, adjusted the pear upon the highest curve of the stump; and then came walking back.

Would the mare stand? No fear of that. She had been trained to stand in one place, for a longer period than was now required of her.

The appearance which the old mare exhibited—nothing visible but her hind legs and buttocks—for the mules had stripped her tail—had by this time wound the spectators up to the risible point; and most of them were yelling.

"Stop your giggle-goggle, will yur," said Rube, clutching his rifle, and taking his stand. The laughter was held in, no one wishing to disturb the shot.

"Now, old Tar-guts, dont waste yur fodder," muttered the trapper, addressing his gun; which the next moment was raised and levelled.

No one doubted but that Rube would hit the object at which he was aiming. It was a shot frequently made by western riflemen—that is, a mark of the same size, at sixty yards. And, no doubt, Rube would have done it; but, just at the moment of his pulling the trigger, the mare's back heaved up in one of its periodic jerks, and the pitahaya fell to the ground!

But the ball had sped; and, creasing the animal's shoulder passed through one of her ears!

The direction of the bullet was not known until afterwards; but its effect was visible at once; for the mare, stung in her tenderest part, uttered a sort of human-like scream; and, wheeling about, came leaping into camp, kicking over every thing that happened to lie in her way!

The yells and loud laughing of the trappers—the odd ejaculations of the Indians—the “vayas” and “vivas” of the Mexicans—the wild oaths of old Rube himself—all formed a medley of sounds that fell strangely upon the ear; and to give an idea of which, is beyond the art of my pen.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PROGRAMME.

SHORTLY after, I was wandering out to the caballada to look after my horse, when the sound of a bugle fell upon my ear. It was the signal for the men to assemble, and I turned back towards the camp.

As I re-entered it, Seguin was standing near his tent, with the bugle still in his hand. The hunters were gathering around him.

They were soon all assembled, and stood in groups, waiting for the chief to speak.

"Comrades!" said Seguin, "to-morrow we break up this camp, for an expedition against the enemy. I have brought you together that you may know my plans; and lend me your advice."

A murmur of applause followed this announcement. The breaking up of a camp is always joyous news to men whose trade is war. It seemed to have a like effect upon this motley group of guerilleros.

The chief continued,

"It is not likely that you will have much fighting. Our dangers will be those of the desert; but we will endeavor to provide against them in the best manner possible.

"I have learned from a reliable source, that our enemies are, at this very time, about starting upon a grand expedition to plunder the towns of Sonora and Chihuahua.

"It is their intention, if not met by the government troops, to extend their foray to Durango itself. Both tribes have combined in this movement; and it is believed that all the warriors will proceed southward, leaving their country unprotected behind them.

"It is my intention, then, as soon as I can ascertain that they have gone out, to enter their territory, and pierce to the main town of the Navajoes."

"Bravo!" "Hooray!" "Bueno!" "Tres-bien!" "Good as wheat!" and numerous other exclamations, hailed this declaration.

"Some of you know my object in making this expedition. Others do not. I will then declare it to you all. It is, then, to——"

"Get a grist of scalps—what else?" cried a rough, brutal-looking fellow, interrupting the chief.

"No, Kirker!" replied Seguin, bending his eye upon the man, with an expression of anger. "It is not that. We expect to meet only women. On his peril let no man touch a hair upon the head of an Indian woman. I shall pay for no scalps of women or children."

"Where then will be our profits? We cannot bring them prisoners? We'll have enough to do to get back ourselves, I reckon, across them deserts."

These questions seemed to express the feelings of others of the band, who muttered their assent.

"You shall lose nothing. Whatever prisoners you take, shall be counted on the ground, and every man shall be paid according to his number, when we return. I will make that good."

"Oh! that's fair enough, Captain," cried several voices.

"Let it be understood then—no women or children. The plunder you shall have—it is yours by our laws—but no blood that can be spared. There is enough on our hands already. Do you all bind yourselves to this?"

"Yes—yes!" "Si!" "Oui—oui!" "Ya—ya!" "All!" "Todos—todos!" cried a multitude of voices, each man answering in his own language.

"Let those, who do not agree to it, speak."

A profound silence followed this proposal. All had bound themselves to the wishes of their leader.

"I am glad that you are unanimous. I will now state my purpose fully. It is but just you should know it."

"Aye let us know that," muttered Kirker, "if taint to raise har we're goin'."

"We go then to seek for our friends and relatives, who for years have been captives to our savage enemy. There are many among us who have lost kindred—wives, sisters, and daughters."

A murmur of assent, uttered chiefly by men in Mexican costume, testified to the truth of this statement.

"I myself," continued Seguin, and his voice slightly trembled as he spoke, "am among that number. Years, long years ago, I was robbed of my child by the Navajoes. I have lately learned

that she is still alive; and at their head town, with many other white captives. We go, then, to release and restore them to their friends and homes."

A shout of approbation broke from the crowd, mingled with exclamations of "Bravo!" "We'll fetch them back!" "Vive le Capitaine!" "Viva el gefé!"

When silence was restored, Seguin continued—

"You know our purpose. You have approved it. I will now make known to you the plan I had designed for accomplishing it, and listen to your advice."

Here the chief paused a moment; while the men remained silent and waiting.

"There are three passes," continued he, at length, "by which we might enter the Indian country from this side. There is, first, the route of the Western Puerco. That would lead us direct to the Navajo towns."

"And why not take that way?" asked one of the hunters, a Mexican. I know the route well, as far as the Pecos towns."

"Because we could not pass the Pecos towns, without being seen by Navajo spies. There are always some of them there. Nay more," continued Seguin, with a look that expressed a hidden meaning, "we would not get far up the Del Norte itself, before the Navajos would be warned of our approach. We have enemies nearer home."

"Carrai! that is true," said a hunter, speaking in Spanish.

"Should they get word of our coming—even though the warriors had gone southward—you can see that we would have a journey for nothing."

"True, true!" shouted several voices.

"For the same reason, we cannot take the pass of Polvidera. Besides, at this season, there is but little prospect of game on either of these routes. We are not prepared for an expedition with our present supply. We must pass through a game country before we can enter on the desert."

"That is true, Captain; but there is as little game to be met, if we go by the old mine. What other road then can we take?"

"There is still another route, better than all, I think. We will strike southward, and then west across the Llanos, to the Old mission. From there we can go north into the Apaché country."

"Yes—yes—that is the best way, Captain."

"We will have a longer journey, but with advantages. We will find the wild cattle or the buffaloes upon the Llanos. Moreover, we will make sure of our time, as we can *cache* in the Pinon hills that overlook the Apaché war trail, and see our enemies pass out. When they have gone south, we can cross the Gila, and keep up the Azul or Prieto. Having accomplished the object of our expedition, we may then return homeward by the nearest route."

"Bravo!" "Viva!" "That's jest right, Captain!" "That's clarly our best plan!" were a few, among the many forms, by which the hunters testified their approval of the programme. There was no dissenting voice. The word "Prieto," struck like music upon their ears. That was a magic word—the name of the far-famed river, on whose waters the trapper legends had long placed the El Dorado—the mountain of gold! Many a story of this celebrated region had been told at the hunter's camp-fire, all agreeing in one point, that there the gold lay in "lumps" upon the surface of the ground, and filled the rivers with its shining grains! Often had the trappers talked of an expedition to this unknown land; and small parties were said to have actually entered it; but none of these adventurers had ever been known to return!

The hunters saw now, for the first time, the prospect of penetrating this region with safety; and their minds were filled with fancies wild and romantic. Not a few of them had joined Seguin's band, in hopes that some day this very expedition might be undertaken, and the "gold mountain" reached. What, then, were their feelings, when Seguin declared his purpose of travelling by the Prieto! At the mention of it, a buzz of peculiar meaning ran through the crowd; and the men turned to each other with looks of satisfaction.

"To-morrow, then, we will march," added the chief. "Go, now, and make your preparations—we start by day-break."

As Seguin ceased speaking, the hunters departed, each to look after his "traps and possibles"—a duty soon performed—as these rude rangers were but little encumbered with camp equipage.

I sat down upon a log, watching for some time the movements of my wild companions; and listening to their rude and Babel-like converse.

At length arrived sunset, or night, for they are almost synonymous in these latitudes. Fresh logs were flung upon the fires, till they blazed up. The men sat around them, cooking, eating, smoking, talking loudly, and laughing at stories that illustrated their own wild habits. The red light fell upon fierce dark faces—now fiercer and more swarthy under the glare of the burning cottonwood.

By its light the savage expression was strengthened on every countenance. Beards looked darker; and teeth gleamed whiter through them. Eyes appeared more sunken; and their glances more brilliant and fiend-like. Picturesque costumes met the eye—turbans, Spanish hats, plumes, and mottled garments—escopettes and rifles, leaning against the trees—saddles, high peaked, resting upon logs and stumps—bridles hanging from the branches overhead—strings of jerked meat, drooping in festoons in front of the tents, and haunches of venison still smoking and dripping their half coagulated drops!

The vermilion smeared on the foreheads of the Indian warriors, gleamed in the night light, as though it were blood. It was a

picture, at once savage and warlike ; warlike, but with an aspect of ferocity, at which the sensitive heart drew back. It was a picture such as may be seen only in a bivouack of guerilleros—of brigands—of *man hunters* !

CHAPTER XXIV.

EL SOL AND LA LUNA.

"COME," said Seguin, touching me on the arm, "our supper is ready: I see the Doctor beckoning us."

I was not slow to answer the call—for the cold air of the evening had sharpened my appetite.

We approached the tent, in front of which was a fire. Over this, the Doctor, assisted by Godé and a Pueblo peon, was just giving the finishing touch to a savoury supper. Part of it had already been carried inside the tent. We followed it, and took our seats upon saddles, blankets, and packs.

"Why, Doctor," said Seguin, "you have proved yourself a perfect *maitre de cuisine*, to-night. This is a supper for a Lucullus."

"Ach! mein Captain: ich have goot help—mein herr Godé assist me most wonderfol."

"Weli, Mr. Haller and I will do full justice to your dishes. Let us to them at once!"

"Oui, oui! bien, Monsieur Capitaine," said Godé, hurrying in with a multitude of viands. The *Canadienne* was always in his element when there was plenty to cook and eat.

We were soon engaged on the fresh steaks (of wild cows), roasted ribs of venison, dried buffalo tongues, tortillas and coffee. The coffee and tortillas were the labors of the Pueblo, in the preparation of which viands he was Godé's master.

But Godé had a choice dish *un petite morceau*—in reserve—which he brought forth with a triumphant flourish.

"Voici, Messieurs," cried he! setting it before us.

"What is it Godé?"

“Un fricasse, Monsieur.”

“Of what?”

“Les frog—what de Yankee call boo frog!”

“A fricasse of bull frogs!”

“Oui, oui, mon maitre. Voulez vous?”

“No—thank you.”

“I will trouble you, Monsieur Godé,” said Seguin.

“Ich, ich mein Godé—frocks ver goot;” and the Doctor held out his platter, to be helped.

Godé in wandering by the river had encountered a pond of giant frogs, and the fricasse was the result. I had not then overcome my national antipathy to the victims of St. Patrick's curse; and, to the voyageur's astonishment, I refused to share the dainty.

During our supper conversation, I gathered some facts of the Doctor's history, which, with what I had already learned, rendered the old man an object of extreme interest to me.

Up to this time, I had wondered what such a character could be doing in such company as that of the Scalp-hunters. I now learnt a few details that explained all.

His name was Reichter—Fredrich Reichter. He was a Strasburgher, and in the city of bells had been a medical practitioner of some repute. The love of science—but particularly of his favourite branch, botany—had lured him away from his Rhenish home. He had wandered to the United States, thence to the Far West, to classify the flora of that remote region. He had spent several years in the great valley of the Mississippi; and, falling in with one of the St. Louis caravans, had crossed the prairies to the oasis of New Mexico. In his scientific wanderings along the Del Norte, he had met with the Scalp-hunters; and—attracted by the opportunity thus afforded him of penetrating into regions hitherto unexplored by the devotees of science—he had offered to accompany the band. This offer was gladly accepted, on account of his services as their doctor; and for two years, he had been with them, sharing their hardships and dangers!

Many a scene of peril had he passed through; many a privation had he undergone, prompted by a love of his favorite study, and, perhaps too, by the dreams of future triumph; when he would one day spread his strange flora before the savans of Europe! Poor Reichter! Poor Fredrich Reichter! yours was the dream of a dream—it never became a reality!

Our supper was at length finished, and washed down with a bottle of Paso wine. There was plenty of this, as well as Taos whiskey in the encampment; and the roars of laughter, that reached us from without, proved that the hunters were imbibing freely of the latter.

The Doctor drew out his great meerschaum—Godé filled a red claystone; while Seguin and I lit our husk cigarrettes.

“But, tell me,” said I, addressing Seguin, “who is the Indian? -- he who performed the wild feat of shooting the — —.”

" Ah! El Sol—he is a Coco."

" A Coco?"

" Yes—of the Maricopa tribe."

" But that makes me no wiser than before. I knew that much already."

" You knew it? Who told you?"

" I heard old Rube mention the fact to his comrade Garey."

" Aye, true; he should know him." Seguin remained silent.

" Well?" continued I, wishing to learn more. " Who are the Maricopas? I have never heard of them."

" It is a tribe but little known—a nation of singular men. They are foes of the Apaché and Navajo; their country lies down the Gila. They came originally from the Pacific—from the shores of the Californian sea."

" But this man is educated, or seems so. He speaks English and French, as well as you or I. He appears to be talented, intelligent, polite—in short, a gentleman!"

" He is all you have said."

" I cannot understand this."

" I will explain to you, my friend. That man was educated at one of the most celebrated universities in Europe. He has travelled farther, and through more countries than, perhaps, either of us."

" But how did he accomplish all this? An Indian!"

" By the aid of that which has often enabled very little men (though El Sol is not one of those) to achieve very great deeds; or, at least, to get the credit of having done so. By gold."

" Gold! and where got he the gold? I have been told that there is very little of it in the hands of the Indians. The white men have robbed them of all they once had?"

" That is in general a truth; and true of the Maricopas. There was a time when they possessed gold in large quantities, and pearls too, gathered from the depths of the Vermilion sea. It is gone. The Jesuit padres could tell whither."

" But this man? El Sol?"

" He is a chief. He has not lost all his gold. He still holds enough to serve him; and it is not likely that the padres will coax it from him for either beads or vermilion. No; he has seen the world, and has learnt the all-pervading value of that shining metal."

" But his sister—is she too educated?"

" No. Poor Luna is still a savage; but he instructs her in many things. He has been absent for several years. He has returned but lately to his tribe."

" Their names are strange—the 'Sun'—the 'Moon!'"

" They were given by the Spaniards of Sonora; but they are only translations or synonymes of their Indian appellations. That is common upon the frontier."

“Why are they here?”

I put this question with hesitation; as I knew there might be some peculiar history connected with the answer.

“Partly,” replied Seguin, “from gratitude I believe, to myself. I rescued El Sol, when a boy, out of the hands of the Navajoes. Perhaps there is still another reason. But come!” continued he, apparently wishing to give a turn to the conversation, “you shall know our Indian friends. You are to be companions for a time. He is a scholar, and will interest you. Take care of your heart with the gentle Luna. Vicente! Go to the tent of the Coco chief. Ask him to come, and drink a cup of Paso wine. Tell him to bring his sister with him.”

The servant hurried away through the camp. While he was gone, we conversed about the feat which the Coco had performed with his rifle.

“I never knew him to fire,” remarked Seguin, “without hitting his mark. There is something mysterious about that. His aim is unerring; and it seems to be, on his part, an act of pure volition. There may be some guiding principle in the mind, independent either of strength of nerve or sharpness of sight. He and another are the only persons I ever knew to possess this singular power.”

The last part of this speech was uttered in a half soliloquy; and Seguin, after delivering it, remained for some moments silent and abstracted.

Before the conversation was resumed, El Sol and his sister entered the tent; and Seguin introduced us to each other. In a few moments, we were engaged—El Sol, the Doctor, Seguin, and myself—in an animated conversation. The subject was not horses, nor guns, nor scalps, nor war, nor blood, nor aught connected with the horrid calling of that camp. We were discussing a point in the pacific science of botany—the relationship of the different forms of the cactus family!

I had studied this science, and I felt that my knowledge of it was inferior to that of any of my three companions! I was struck with it then—and more when I reflected on it afterwards—the fact of such a conversation—the time—the place—and the men who carried it on!

For nearly two hours we sat smoking and talking on like subjects!

While we were thus engaged, I observed upon the canvass the shadow of a man. Looking forth—as my position enabled me without rising—I recognized, in the light that streamed out of the tent, a hunting shirt with a worked pipe-holder hanging over the breast!

La Luna sat near her brother, sewing *parfleche* soles upon a pair of moccasins. I noticed that she wore an abstracted air and at short intervals, glanced out from the opening of the tent. While we were engrossed with our discussion, she rose silently,

though not with any appearance of stealth, and went out.

After a while she returned. I could read the love-light in her eye, as she resumed her occupation.

El Sol and his sister at length left us; and, shortly after, Seguin, the Doctor, and I rolled ourselves in our serapés, and lay down to sleep.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE WAR-TRAIL.

THE band was mounted by earliest dawn; and as the notes of the bugle died away, our horses plashed through the river, crossing to the other side. We soon debouched from the timbered bottom, coming out upon sandy plains that stretched westward to the Mimbres mountains. We rode over these plains in a southerly direction, climbing long ridges of sand that traversed them from east to west. The drift lay in deep furrows; and our horses sank above the fetlocks as we journeyed. We were crossing the western section of the "Jornada."

We travelled in Indian file. Habit has formed this disposition among Indians and hunters on the march. The tangled paths of the forest, and the narrow defiles of the mountains, admit of no other. Even when passing a plain, our cavalcade was strung out for a quarter of a mile. The *atajo* followed in charge of the "arrieros."

For the first day of our march we kept on without "nooning." There was neither grass nor water on the route; and a halt under the hot sun would not have refreshed us.

Early in the afternoon, a dark line became visible, stretching across the plain. As we drew nearer, a green wall rose before us; and we distinguished the groves of cottonwood. The hunters knew it to be the timbers on the Paloma. We were soon passing under the shade of its quivering canopy; and reaching the banks of a clear stream, we halted for the night.

Our camp was formed without either tents or lodges. Those used on the Del Norte had been left behind in *cache*. An expedition like ours could not be cumbered with camp baggage. Each man's blanket was his house, his bed, and his cloak,

Fires were kindled, and ribs roasted; and, fatigued with our journey—the first day's ride has always this effect—we were soon wrapped in our blankets, and sleeping soundly.

We were summoned, next morning, by the call of the bugle sounding "reveille." The band partook somewhat of a military organization; and every one knew the signals of the light cavalry.

Our breakfast was soon cooked and eaten; our horses were drawn from their pickets, saddled, and mounted; and, at another signal, we moved forward on the route.

The incidents of our first journey were repeated, with but little variety, for several days in succession. We travelled through a desert country, here and there covered with wild sage and mezquite.

We passed on our route clumps of cacti, and thickets of creosote bushes, that emitted their foul odors as we rode through them. On the fourth evening we camped at a spring, the "Ojo de Vaca," lying on the eastern borders of the Llanos.

Over the western section of this great prairie passes the Apache war-trail, running southward into Sonora. Near the trail, and overlooking it, a high mountain rises out of the plain. It is called the Pinon.

It was our design to reach this mountain, and caché among the rocks, near a well known spring, until our enemies should pass; but to effect this we would have to cross the war-trail, and our own tracks would betray us! Here was a difficulty, which had not occurred to Seguin. There was no other point except the Pinon, from which we could certainly see the enemy on their route, and be ourselves hidden. This mountain then must be reached; and how were we to effect it without crossing the trail?

After our arrival at Ojo de Vaca, Seguin drew the men together to deliberate on this matter.

"Let us spread," said a hunter, "and keep wide over the prairie, till we've got clar past the Apash trail. They wont notice a single track hyar and thar, I reckon."

"Ay, but they will though," rejoined another. "Do ye think an Injun's agoin' to pass a shod horse-track 'thout follerin it up? No siree!"

"We kin muffle the hoofs, as far as that goes," suggested the first speaker.

"Wagh! That ud only make it worse. I tried that dodge once afore, an nearly lost my har for it. He's a blind Injun kin be fooled that-away. 'Twont do nohow."

"They're not goin' to be so partickler when they're on the war-trail, I warrant ye. I don't see why it shouldn't do well enough."

Most of the hunters agreed with the former speaker. The Indians would not fail to notice so many muffled tracks; and suspect there was "something in the wind." The idea of "muffling" was therefore abandoned. What next?

The trapper Rube—who, up to this time, had said nothing—now drew the attention of all by abruptly exclaiming “Pish!”

“Well!—what have you to say, old hoss?” inquired one of the hunters.

“That yur a set o’ cussed fools, one and all o’ee. I kud take the full o’ that parairy o’ horses acrosst the Pash-trail, ’ithout making a sign that any Injun’s a gwine to foller—particklerly an Injun on the war beat like them is now.”

“How?” asked Seguin.

“I’ll tell yur how Cap, av yur’il tell me what ’ee wants to cross the trail for?”

“Why—to conceal ourselves in the Pinon range—what else?”

“An’ how are ’ee gwine to caché in the Peenyun ’ithout water?”

“There is a spring on the side of it, at the foot of the mountain.”

“That’s true as Scriptor. I knows that, but at that very spring the Injuns ’ll cool thur lappers as they go down south’ard. How are ’ee gwine to get at it with this cavayard ’ithout makin’ sign? This child don’t see that very clur.”

“You are right, Rube. We cannot touch the Pinon spring without leaving our marks too plainly; and it is the very place where the war-party may make a halt.”

“I sees no confounded use in the hul on us crossin’ the parairy now. We kant hunt buffler till they’ve passed anyways. So it’s this child’s idea that a dozen o’ us ’ll be enough to caché in the Peenyun, and watch for the niggurs a-goin’ south. A dozen mout do it safe enough, but not the hul cavayard.”

“And would you have the rest remain here?”

“Not hyar. Let ’em go northart from hyar, and then strike west thour the Musquite hills. Thur’s a crick runs thur, about twenty miles or so this side the trail. They kin git water and grass and caché thur till we sends for ’em.”

“But why not remain by this spring, where we have both in plenty?”

“Cap’n, jest because some o’ the Injun party may take a notion in thur heads to kum this way themselves. I reckon we had better make blind tracks afore leavin’ hyar.”

The force of Rube’s reasoning was apparent to all; and to none more than Seguin himself. It was resolved to follow his advice at once. The vidette party was detailed; and the rest of the band, with the atajo—after blinding the tracks around the spring—struck off in a north-westerly direction.

They were to travel on to the Mezquit hills, that lay some ten or twelve miles to the north-west of the spring. There they were to caché by a stream—well known to several of them—and wait until warned to join us.

The vidette party—of whom I was one—moved westward across the prairie

Rube, Garey, El Sol, and his sister, with Sanchez—a *ci-devant* bull-fighter—and half a dozen others, composed the party. Seguin himself was our head and guide.

Before leaving the Ojo de Vaca, we had stripped the shoes off our horses—filling the nail-holes with clay—so that their tracks would be taken for those of wild mustangs! Such were the precautions of men, who knew that their lives might be the forfeit of a single footprint.

As we approached the point, where the war-trail intersected the prairie, we separated and deployed to distances of a half-mile each. In this manner we rode forward to the Pinon mountain, where we came together again, and turned northward along the foot of the range.

It was sundown, when we reached the spring—having ridden all day across the plain. We descried it, as we approached, close in to the mountain foot, and marked by a grove of cottonwood and willows. We did not take our horses near the water; but, having reached a defile in the mountain, we rode into it, and cachéd them in a thicket of nut-pine. In this thicket we spent the night.

With the first light of morning we made a reconnoissance of our caché.

In front of us was a low ridge covered with loose rocks and straggling trees of the nut-pine. This ridge separated the defile from the plain; and from its top, screened by a thicket of the pines, we commanded a view of the water, as well as the trail, and the Llanos stretching away to the north, south, and east. It was just the sort of hiding-place we required for our object.

In the morning it became necessary to descend for water. For this purpose we had provided ourselves with a mule bucket, and extra *xuages*. We visited the spring, and filled our vessels—taking care to leave no traces of our footsteps in the mud.

We kept constant watch during the first day, but no Indians appeared. Deer and antelopes, with a small gang of buffaloes, came to the spring branch to drink; and then roamed off again over the green meadows. It was a tempting sight, for we could easily have crept within shot; but we dared not touch them. We knew that the Indian dogs would scent their slaughter.

In the evening we went again for water—making the journey twice—as our animals began to suffer from thirst. We adopted the same precautions as before.

Next day we again watched the horizon to the north with eager eyes. Seguin had a small pocket glass, and we could see the prairie with it for a distance of nearly thirty miles; but as yet no enemy could be descried.

The third day passed with a like result; and we began to fear that the warriors had taken some other trail.

Another circumstance rendered us uneasy. We had eaten nearly the whole of our provisions, and were now chewing the

raw nuts of the pinon. We dared not kindle a fire to roast them. Indians can "read" the smoke at a great distance.

The fourth day arrived, and still no "signs" on the horizon to the north. Our *tasajo* was all eaten, and we began to hunger. The nuts did not satisfy us. The game was in plenty at the spring, and mottling the grassy plain. One proposed to lie among the willows, and shoot an antelope or a black-tailed deer—of which there were troops.

We dare not," said Seguin, "their dogs would find the blood. It would betray us."

"I can procure one without letting a drop," rejoined a Mexican hunter.

"How?" inquired several in a breath.

The man pointed to his lasso.

"But your tracks—you would make deep footmarks in the struggle?"

"We can blind them, Captain," rejoined the man.

"You may try, then," assented the chief.

The Mexican unfastened the lasso from his saddle; and, taking a companion, proceeded to the spring. They crept in among the willows, and lay in wait. We watched them from the ridge.

They had not remained more than a quarter of an hour, when a herd of antelopes was seen approaching from the plain. These walked directly for the spring—one following the other, in Indian file. They were soon close in to the willows, where the hunters had concealed themselves. Here they suddenly halted, throwing up their heads, and snuffing the air. They had scented danger, but it was too late for the foremost to turn and lope off.

"Yonder goes the lasso?" cried one.

We saw the noose flying in the air, and settling over his head. The herd suddenly wheeled; but the loop was around the neck of their leader; and after three or four skips, he sprang up, and falling upon his back, lay motionless!

The hunter came out from the willows, and, taking up the animal—now choked dead—carried him toward the entrance of the defile. His companion followed, blinding the tracks of both. In a few minutes they had reached us. The antelope was skinned, and eaten raw, in the blood!

Our horses grew thin with hunger and thirst. We fear to go too often to the water, though we become less cautious as the hours pass. Two more antelopes are lassoed by the expert hunter.

The night of the fourth day is a clear moonlight. The Indians often march by moonlight—particularly when on the war-trail. We keep our vidette stationed during the night, as in the day. On this night we looked out with more hopes than usual. It is such a lovely night—a full moon, clear and calm.

We are not disappointed. Near midnight the vidette awakes

us. There are dark forms on the sky, away to the north. It may be buffaloes, but we see that they are approaching.

We stand, one and all, straining our eyes through the white air, and away over the silvery sward. There are glancing objects—arms, it must be. “Horses! horsemen! They are Indians!”

“O God! comrades, we are mad! Our horses—*they may neigh!*”

We bound after our leader down the hill, over the rocks, and through the trees. We run for the thicket where our animals are tied. We may be too late, for horses can hear each other miles off; and the slightest concussion vibrates afar through the elastic atmosphere of these high plateaus. We reach the cabalada. What is Seguin doing? He has torn the blanket from under his saddle, and is muffing the head of his horse!

We follow his example—without exchanging a word—for we know this is the only plan to pursue.

In a few minutes we feel secure again, and return to our watch station on the height.

We had shaved our time closely; for, on reaching the hill-top, we could hear the exclamations of Indians, the “thump, thump” of hoofs on the hard plain, and an occasional neigh, as their horses scented the water. The foremost were advancing to the spring; and we could see the long line of mounted men, stretching in their deployment, to the far horizon!

Closer they came, and we could distinguish the pennons and glittering points of their spears. We could see their half naked bodies gleaming in the clear moonlight!

In a short time the foremost of them had ridden up to the bushes—halting as they came, and giving their animals to drink. Then one by one wheeled out of the water; and, trotting a short distance over the prairie, flung themselves to the ground, and commenced unharnessing their horses!

It was evidently their intention to camp for the night.

For nearly an hour they came filing forward—until two thousand warriors, with their horses, dotted the plain below us!

We stood observing their movements. We had no fear of being seen ourselves. We were lying with our bodies behind the rocks, and our faces partially screened by the foliage of the pinon trees. We could see and hear with distinctness all that was passing—for the savages were not over three hundred yards from our position!

They proceeded to picket their horses in a wide circle, far out on the plain. There the grama grass is longer and more luxuriant than in the immediate neighborhood of the spring. They strip the animals, and bring away their horse-furniture—consisting of hair-bridles, buffalo robes, and skins of the grizzly bear. Few have saddles. Indians do not generally use them on a war expedition.



For two hours we watch their movements, and listen to their voices. Then the horse-guard is detailed, and marches off to the caballada; and the Indians, one after another, spread their skins, roll themselves in their blankets, and sleep.—PAGE 137.

Each man strikes his spear into the ground, and rests against it his shield, bow, and quiver. He places his robe or skin beside it. That is his tent and bed.

The spears are soon aligned upon the prairie—forming a front of several hundred yards—and thus they have pitched their camp with a quickness and regularity far outstripping the chasseurs of Vincennes.

They are encamped in two parties. There are two bands—the Apaché and Navajo. The latter is much the smaller, and rests farther off from our position.

We hear them cutting and chopping with their tomahawks among the thickets at the foot of the mountain. We can see them carrying fagots out upon the plain, piling them together, and setting them on fire.

Many fires are soon blazing brightly. The savages squat around them, cooking their suppers. We can see the paint glittering on their faces and naked breasts. They are of many hues. Some are red, as though they were smeared with blood. Some appear of a jetty blackness. Some black on one side of the face, and red or white on the other. Some are mottled, like hounds; and some striped and chequered. Their cheeks and breasts are tattooed with the forms of animals—wolves, panthers, bears, buffaloes—and other hideous devices, plainly discernible under the blaze of the pine-wood fires. Some have a red hand painted on their bosoms; and not a few exhibit as their device the death's head and cross bones!

All these are their “coats” of arms, symbolical of the “medicine” of the wearer; adopted, no doubt, from like silly fancies as those which put the crest upon the carriage, on the lacquey's button, or the brass seal-stamp of the merchant's clerk.

There is vanity in the wilderness. In savage, as in civilized life, there is a snobdom.

“What do we see? Bright helmets—brazen and steel—with nodding plumes of the ostrich! These upon savages! Whence came these?”

“From the cuirassiers of Chihuahua. Poor devils! They were roughly handled upon one occasion by these savage lancers.”

We see the red meat sputtering over the fires upon the spits of willow rods. We see the Indians fling the pinon nuts into the cinders, and then draw them forth again, parched and smoking. We see them light their claystone pipes, and send forth clouds of blue vapor. We see them gesticulate as they relate their red adventures to one another. We hear them shout, and chatter, and laugh like mountebanks! How unlike the *forest* Indian!

For two hours we watch their movements, and listen to their voices. Then the horse-guard is detailed, and marches off to the caballada; and the Indians, one after another, spread their skins, roll themselves in their blankets, and sleep.

The fires cease to blaze, but by the moonlight we can distin-

guish the prostrate bodies of the savages. White objects are moving among them. They are the dogs, prowling after the debris of their supper. These run from point to point, snarling at one another, and barking at the coyotés that sneak around the skirts of the camp.

Out upon the prairie, the horses are still awake and busy. We can hear them stamping their hoofs, and cropping the rich pasture. Erect forms are seen standing at intervals along the line. These are the guards of the caballada.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THREE DAYS IN THE TRAP.

Our attention was now turned to our own situation. Dangers and difficulties suddenly presented themselves to our minds.

“What if they should stay here to hunt!”

The thought seemed to occur to all of us at the same instant; and we faced each other with looks of apprehension and dismay.

“It is not improbable,” said Seguin, in a low and emphatic voice. “It is plain they have no supply of meat, and how are they to pass to the south without it? They must hunt here, or elsewhere. Why not here?”

“If so, we’re in a nice trap!” interrupted a hunter, pointing first to the embouchure of the defile, and then to the mountain. “How are we to get out? I’d like to know that.”

Our eyes followed the direction indicated by the speaker. In front of the ravine, in which we were, extended the line of the Indian camp—not a hundred yards distant from the rocks that lay around its entrance! There was an Indian sentinel still nearer; but it would be impossible to pass out—even were he asleep—without encountering the dogs that prowled in numbers around the camp!

Behind us, the mountain rose vertically like a wall. It was plainly impassable. We were fairly “in the trap.”

“Carrai!” exclaimed one of the men, “we will die of hunger and thirst if they stay to hunt!”

“We may die sooner,” rejoined another, “if they take a notion in their heads to wander up the gully!”

This was not improbable, though it was but little likely. The ravine was a sort of *cul de sac*, that entered the mountain in a slanting direction, and ended at the bottom of the cliff. There was no object to attract our enemies into it—unless indeed they might come up in search of pinon nuts. Some of their dogs, too, might wander up, hunting for food, or attracted by the scent of

our horses. These were probabilities; and we trembled as each of them was suggested.

"If they do not find us," said Seguin, encouragingly, "we may live for a day or two on the pinons. When these fail us, one of our horses must be killed. How much water have we?"

"Thank our luck, Captain, the gourds are nearly full."

"But our poor animals must suffer."

"There is no danger of thirst," said El Sol, looking downward, "while these last;" and he struck with his foot a large round mass that grew among the rocks. It was the spheroidal cactus. "See!" continued he, "there are hundreds of them!"

All present knew the meaning of this, and regarded the cacti with a murmur of satisfaction.

"Comrades!" said Seguin, "it is of no use to weary ourselves. Let those sleep who can. One can keep watch yonder, while another stays up here. Go, Sanchez!" and the chief pointed down the ravine to a spot that commanded a view of its mouth.

The sentinel walked off, and took his stand in silence. The rest of us descended, and after looking to the muffling of our horses, returned to the station of the vidette upon the hill. Here we rolled ourselves in our blankets; and lying down among the rocks, slept out the night.

We are awake before dawn, and peering through the leaves with feelings of keen solicitude.

There is no movement in the Indian camp! It is a bad indication. Had they intended to travel on, they would have been stirring before this. They are always on the route before day-break. These "signs" strengthen our feelings of apprehension.

The gray light begins to spread over the prairie. There is a white band along the eastern sky. There are noises in the camp. There are voices. Dark forms move about among the spears. Tall savages stride over the plain. The robes of skins are wrapped around their shoulders to protect them from the raw air of the morning. They carry faggots. They are rekindling the fires!

Our men talk in whispers, as we lie straining our eyes to catch every movement.

"It's plain they intend to make a stay of it."

"Ay! we're in for it, that's sartin. Wagh! I wonder how long thar agoin' to squat hyar any how."

"Three days at least—may be four or five."

"Great Gollys! we will be froze in half the time."

"What would they be doin' here so long? I warrant ye they'll clar out as soon as they can."

"So they will. But how can they in less time?"

"They can get all the meat they want in a day. See! yonder's buffalo a plenty; look! away—yonder!" and the speaker

points to several black objects outlined against the brightening sky. It is a gang of buffaloes.

"That's true enough. In half a day I warrant they kin get all the meat they want; but how are they to jirk it in less than three? That's what I want to know."

"*Es verdad!*" says one of the Mexicans, a cibolero. "*Tres dias, al menos!*" (it is true! three days at least!)

"Ay, hombré; an' with a smart chance o' sunshine at that, I guess."

This conversation is carried on by two or three of the men in a low tone, but loud enough for the rest of us to overhear it.

It reveals a new phase of our dilemma on which we have not before reflected. Should the Indians stay to "jerk" their meat we will be in extreme danger from thirst, as well as of being discovered in our caché.

We know that the process of jerking buffalo beef takes three days, and that with a hot sun, as the hunter has intimated. This, with the first day required for hunting, will keep us four days in the ravine!

The prospect is appalling. We feel that death or the extreme torture of thirst is before us. We have no fear of hunger. Our horses are in the grove, and our knives in our belts. We can live for weeks upon them; but will the cacti assuage the thirst of men and horses for a period of three or four days? This is a question no one can answer. It has often relieved the hunter for a short period, enabling him to crawl on to the water; but four days?

The trial will soon commence. The day has fairly broken. The Indians spring to their feet. About one-half of them draw the pickets of their horses, and lead them to the water. They adjust their bridles, pluck up their spears, snatch their bows, shoulder their quivers, and leap on horseback.

After a short consultation they gallop off to the eastward. In half an hour's time, we can see them "running" the buffalo far out upon the prairie—piercing them with their arrows, and impaling them on their long lances!

Those who have remained behind, lead their horses down to the spring-branch, and back again to the grass. Now they chop down young trees, and carry faggots to the fires. See! they are driving long stakes into the ground, and stretching ropes from one to the other! For what purpose? We know too well.

"Ila! look yonder," mutters one of the hunters, as this is first noticed; "yonder goes the jerking lines! Now we're caged in airnest, I reckon."

"Por todos santos, es verdad!"

"Carrambo! carajo! chingaro!" growls the cibolero, who well knows the meaning of those stakes and lines.

We watch with a fearful interest the movements of the savages.

We have now no longer any doubt of their intention to remain for several days.

The stakes are soon erected, running for a hundred yards or more, along the front of the encampment. The savages await the return of their hunters. Some mount and scour off toward the scene of the buffalo battue, still going on, far out upon the plain.

We peer through the leaves with great caution, for the day is bright, and the eyes of our enemies are quick, and scan every object. We speak only in whispers—though our voices could not be heard if we conversed a little louder, but fear makes us fancy that they might. We are all concealed except our eyes. These glance through small loop-holes in the foliage.

The Indian hunters have been gone about two hours. We now see them returning over the prairie in straggling parties.

They ride slowly back. Each brings his load before him on the withers of his horse. They have large masses of red flesh; freshly skinned and smoking. Some carry the sides of the quarters; others the hump-ribs, the tongue, heart, and liver—the *petites morceaux*—wrapped up in the skins of the slaughtered animals.

They arrive in camp, and fling their loads to the ground.

Now begins a scene of noise and confusion. The savages run to and fro, whooping, chattering, laughing, and dancing. They draw their long scalping-knives, and hew off broad steaks. They spit them over the blazing fires. They cut out the hump-ribs. They tear off the white fat, and stuff the *baudins*. They split the brown liver, eating it raw! They break the shanks with their tomahawks, and delve out the savory marrow, and, through all these operations, they whoop, and chatter, and laugh, and dance over the ground like so many madmen!

This scene lasts for more than an hour.

Fresh parties of hunters mount and ride off. Those who remain, cut the meat into long thin strips, and hang it over the lines—already prepared for this purpose. It is thus left to be baked by the sun into *tasajo*.

We know part of what is before us. It is a fearful prospect; but men, like those who compose the band of Seguin, do not despond while the shadow of a hope remains. It is a barren spot indeed, where they cannot find resources.

“We needn’t holler till we’re hurt,” says one of the hunters.

“If yer call an empty belly a hurt,” rejoins another, “I’ve got it already. I kud jest eat a raw jackass ’thout skinnin’ him.”

“Come, fellers!” cried a third, “let’s gramble for a when o’ these peenyuns.”

Following this suggestion, we commence searching for the nuts of the pine. We find to our dismay, that there is but a limited supply of this precious fruit—not enough, either on the trees or the ground, to sustain us for two days!

By Gosh!" exclaims one, "we'll have to draw for our critters."

"Well; an' if we have to—time enough yet a bit, I guess. We'll bite our claws a while first."

The water is distributed in a small cup. There is still a little left in the xuages; but our poor horses suffer.

"Let us look to them," says Seguin; and drawing his knife, he commences skinning one of the cacti. We follow his example.

We carefully pare off the volutes and spikelets. A cool gummy liquid exudes from the opened vessels. We break the short stems; and, lifting the green globe-like masses, carry them to the thicket, and place them before our animals. These seize the succulent plants greedily, crunch them between their teeth, and swallow both sap and fibres. It is food and drink to them. Thank Heaven! we may yet save them!

This act is repeated several times, until they have had enough.

We keep two videttes constantly on the look-out—one upon the hill; the other commanding the mouth of the defile. The rest of us go through the ravine, along the sides of the ridge, in search of the cones of the pinon.

Thus our first day is spent.

The Indian hunters keep coming into their camp until a late hour, bringing with them their burdens of buffalo flesh. Fires blaze over the ground, and the savages sit around them, cooking and eating, nearly all the night!

On the day following, they do not rouse themselves until a late hour. It is a day of lassitude and idleness, for the meat is hanging over the strings, and they can only wait upon it. They lounge around the camp, mending their bridles and lassos, or looking to their weapons. They lead their horses to the water, and then picket them on the fresh ground. They cut large pieces of meat, and broil them over the fires. Hundreds of them are at all times engaged in this last occupation. They seem to eat continually!

Their dogs are busy too, growling over the knife-stripped bones. They are not likely to leave their feast. They will not stray up the ravine while it lasts. In this thought we find consolation.

The sun is hot all the second day, and scorches us in the dry defile. It adds to our thirst—but we do not regret this so much, knowing it will hasten the departure of the savages. Towards evening, the *tasajo* begins to look brown and shrivelled. Another such day, and it will be ready for packing!

Our water is out; and we chew the succulent slices of the cactus. It relieves our thirst without quenching it!

Our appetite of hunger is growing stronger. We have eaten all the pinons, and nothing remains but to slaughter one of our horses.

"Let us hold out till to-morrow," suggests one. "Give the

poor brutes a chance. Who knows but what they may flit in the morning?"

This proposition is voted in the affirmative. No hunter cares to risk losing his horse—especially when out upon the prairies.

Gnawed by hunger, we lie waiting for the third day.

The morning breaks at last, and we crawl forward, as usual, to watch the movements of the camp. The savages sleep late, as on yesterday; but they arouse themselves at length; and, after watering their animals, commenced cooking. We see the crimson steaks, and juicy ribs, smoking over the fires; and the savory odours are wafted to us on the breeze. Our appetites are whetted to a painful keenness. We can endure no longer. A horse must die!

Whose? Mountain law will soon decide.

Eleven white pebbles and a black one are thrown into the water bucket, and, one by one, we are blinded and led forward.

I tremble as I place my hand in the vessel. It is like throwing the die for my own life.

"Thank Heaven! My Moro is safe!"

One of the Mexicans has drawn the black.

"Thar's luck in that," exclaims a hunter. "Good fat mustang better than poor bull any day!"

The devoted horse is in fact a well-conditioned animal; and placing our videttes again, we proceed to the thicket to slaughter him.

We set about it with great caution. We tie him to a tree, and hople his fore and hind feet, lest he may struggle. We purpose bleeding him to death.

The cibolero has unsheathed his long knife, while a man stands by, holding the bucket to catch the precious fluid—the blood! Some have cups in their hands, ready to drink it as it flows!

We are startled by an unusual sound. We look through the leaves. A large gray animal is standing by the edge of the thicket, gazing in at us. It is wolfish-looking. Is it a wolf? No. *It is an Indian dog!*

The knife is stayed. Each man draws his own. We approach the animal, and endeavor to coax it nearer. But no. It suspects our intentions, utters a low growl, and runs away down the defile.

We follow it with our eyes. The owner of the doomed horse is the vidette. The dog must pass him to get out; and he stands with his long lance ready to receive it.

The animal sees himself intercepted, turns and runs back, and again turning makes a desperate rush to pass the vidette. As he nears the latter he utters a loud howl. The next moment he is impaled upon the lance!

Several of us rush up the hill to ascertain if the howling has attracted the attention of the savages. There is no unusual movement among them. They have not heard it.

The dog is divided and devoured—before his quivering flesh has time to get cold! The horse is reprieved!

Again we feed our animals on the cooling cactus. This occupies us for some time. When we return to the hill, a glad sight is before us. We see the warriors seated around their fires, renewing the paint upon their bodies! We know the meaning of this.

The tasajo is nearly black. Thanks to the hot sun, it will soon be ready for packing.

Some of the Indians are engaged in poisoning the points of their arrows! All these "signs" inspire us with fresh courage. They will soon march; if not to-night, by daybreak on the morrow.

We lie congratulating ourselves, and watching every movement of their camp. Our hopes continue rising as the day falls.

Ia! there is an unusual stir. Some order has been issued. "Voila!" "Mira! Mira!" "See!" "Look, look!" are the half-whispered ejaculations that break from the hunters—as this is observed.

"By the livin' catamount, thar a goin' to mizzle!"

We see the savages pull down the tasajo, and tie it in bunches. Then every man runs out for his horse. The pickets are drawn: the animals are led in, and watered; they are bridled; the robes are thrown over them and girted. The warriors pluck up their lances, sling their quivers, seize their shields and bows, and leap lightly upon horseback. The next moment they form, with the rapidity of thought; and wheeling in their tracks, ride off in single file, heading to the south.

The larger band has passed. The smaller—the Navajoes—following the same trail. No! The latter has suddenly filed to the left; and is crossing the prairie towards the east—towards the spring of the Ojo de Vaca!

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DIGGERS.

Our first impulse was to rush down the ravine, satisfy our thirst at the spring, and our hunger on the half-polished bones that were strewed over the prairie. Prudence, however, restrained us.

"Wait till they're clear gone," said Garey. They'll be out o' sight in three skips o' a goat."

"Yes! stay where we are a bit," added another; "some of them may ride back—something may be forgotten."

This was not improbable; and, in spite of the promptings of our appetites, we resolved to remain a while longer in the defile.

We descended straightway into the thicket to make preparations for moving—to saddle our horses, and take off their mufflings; which by this, had nearly blinded them. Poor brutes! they seemed to know that relief was at hand.

While we were engaged in these operations, our vidette was kept at the top of the hill; to watch both bands, and warn us when their heads should sink to the prairie level.

"I wonder why the Navajoes have gone by the Ojo de Vaca;" remarked our chief, with an apparent anxiety in his manner. "It is well our comrades did not remain there."

"They'll be tired o' waitin' on us whar they are," rejoined Garey; "unless black-tails is plentier among them musquits, than I think for."

"Vaya;" exclaimed Sanchez, "they may thank the Santissima, they were not in our company. I'm spent to a skeleton—*Mira! Carrai!*"

Our horses were at length bridled and saddled, and our lassos coiled up. Still the vidette had not warned us! We grew every moment more impatient.

"Come!" cried one; "hang it! they're far enough now. They're not a goin' to be gapin' back all the way. They're looking a-head, I'm bound. Golly! Thar's fine shines afore-them."

We could resist no longer. We called out to the vidette. He could just see the heads of the hindmost.

"That will do," cried Seguin; "Come! take your horses!"

The men obeyed with alacrity; and we all moved down the ravine, leading our animals.

We pressed forward to the opening. A young man, the pueblo servant of Seguin, was a-head of the rest. He was impatient to reach the water. He had gained the mouth of the defile, when we saw him fall back with frightened looks, dragging at his horse, and exclaiming;

"Mi amo! mi amo! todavia son!" (Master, master, they are here yet!)

"Who?" inquired Seguin, running forward in haste

"The Indians, master—the Indians!"

"You are mad! Where did you see them?"

"In the camp, master—look yonder!"

I pressed forward, with Seguin, to the rocks that lay along the entrance of the defile. We looked cautiously over. A singular sight met our eyes.

The camp ground was lying as the Indians had left it. The stakes were still standing. The shaggy hides of the buffaloes, and piles of their bones, were strewn upon the plain. Hundreds of Coyotes were loping back and forward, snarling at one another, or pursuing one of their number who had picked up a nicer morsel than his companions. The fires were still smouldering; and the wolves galloped through the ashes, raising them in yellow clouds.

But there was a sight stranger than all this—a startling sight to me. Five or six forms—*almost* human—were moving about among the fires, collecting the debris of skins and bones, and quarreling with the wolves that barked round them in troops. Five or six others—similar forms—were seated around a pile of burning wood, silently gnawing at half-roasted ribs! "Can they—yes—they are human beings!"

I was, for a moment, awe-struck, as I gazed at the shrivelled and dwarfy bodies; the long ape-like arms; and huge disproportioned heads, from which fell their hair in snaky tangles, black and matted!

But one or two appeared to have any article of dress; and that was a ragged breech-clout. The others were naked as the wild beasts around them; naked from head to foot!

It was a horrid sight to look upon these fiend-like dwarfs squatted around the fires, holding up half-naked bones in their long wrinkled arms, and tearing off the flesh with their glistening

teeth! It was a horrid sight indeed; and it was some moments before I could recover sufficiently from my amazement to inquire who, or what they were. I did so at length.

"Los Yamparicos," answered the Cibolero.

"Who?" I asked again.

"Los Indios Yamparicos, Senor."

"The Diggers, the Diggers," said a hunter, thinking that would better explain the strange apparitions.

"Yes, they are Digger Indians," added Seguin. "Come on—we have nothing to fear from them."

"But we have somethin' to *git* from them," rejoined one of the hunters, with a significant look. "Digger plew good as any other; worth jest as much as 'Pash chief."

"There must no one fire," said Seguin in a firm tone. "It is too soon yet; look yonder!" and he pointed over the plain, where two or three glancing objects—the helmets of the retreating warriors—could still be seen above the grass.

"How are we goin' to get them, then, Captain?" inquired the hunter. "They'll beat us to the rocks—they kin run like scared dogs."

"Better let them go, poor devils!" said Seguin, seemingly unwilling that blood should be spilled so wantonly.

"No, Captain," rejoined the same speaker, "we won't fire, but we'll *git* them, if we kin, 'ithout it. Boys, follow me down this way!"

And the man was about guiding his horse in among the loose rocks, so as to pass unperceived between the dwarfs and the mountain.

But the brutal fellow was frustrated in his design, for at that moment El Sol and his sister appeared in the opening, and their brilliant habiliments caught the eyes of the Diggers. Like startled deer, they sprang to their feet and ran, or rather flew, toward the foot of the mountain. The hunters galloped to intercept them; but they were too late. Before they could come up, the Diggers had dived into the crevices of the rocks, or were seen climbing like chamois along the cliffs, far out of reach!

One of the hunters only, Sanchez, succeeded in making a capture. His victim had reached a high ledge, and was scrambling along it, when the lasso of the bull-fighter settled around his neck. The next moment he was plucked out into the air, and fell with a "cranch" upon the rocks!

I rode forward to look at him. He was dead. He had been crushed by the fall—in fact, mangled to a shapeless mass—and exhibited a most loathsome and hideous sight.

The unfeeling hunter recked not of this. With a coarse jest, he stooped over the body, and, severing the scalp, stuck it, reeking and bloody, behind the waist of his calzoneros!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DACOMA.

WE all now hurried forward to the spring, and dismounting, turned our horses' heads to the water, leaving them to drink at will. We had no fears of their running away.

Our own thirst required slaking as much as theirs, and, rushing into the branch, we poured the cold water down our throats in cupfulls. We felt as though we should never be surfeited; but another appetite, equally strong, lured us away from the spring, and we ran over the camp-ground in search of the means to gratify it. We scattered the coyotés and white wolves with our shouts, and drove them with missiles from the ground.

We were about stooping to pick up the dust-covered morsels, when a strange exclamation from one of the hunters caused us to look hastily round.

"Malraya! camarados, mira el arco!"

The Mexican who uttered these words stood pointing to an object that lay upon the ground at his feet. We ran up to ascertain what it was.

"Caspita!" again ejaculated the man. "It is a *white* bow!"

"A white bow, by Gosh!" echoed Garey.

"A white bow!" shouted several others, eyeing the object with looks of astonishment and alarm.

"That belonged to a big warrior, I'll sartify," said Garey.

"Ay!" added another, "an' one that'll ride back for it as soon as—holys! look yonder! he's coming by——"

Our eyes rolled over the prairie together—eastward—as the speaker pointed. An object was just visible low down on the horizon, like a moving blazing star! It was not that. At a glance we all knew what it was. It was a helmet flashing under the sunbeam, as it rose and fell to the measured gallop of a horse!

“To the willows, men! to the willows!” shouted Seguin.

“Drop the bow! Leave it where it was. To your horses. Lead them! Crouch! crouch!”

We all ran to our horses, and seizing the bridles, half led, half dragged them within the willow thicket. We leaped into our saddles so as to be ready for any emergency, and sat peering through the leaves that screened us.

“Shall we fire as he comes up, Captain?” asked one of the men.

“No.”

“We kin take him nicely just as he stoops for the bow?”

“No! not for your lives!”

“What then, captain?”

“Let him take it and go,” was Seguin’s reply.

“Why, Captain, what’s that for?”

“Fools! Do you not see that the whole tribe would be back upon our trail before midnight? Are you mad? Let him go. He may not notice our tracks as our horses are not shod. If so, let him go as he came, I tell you.”

“But how, captain, if he squints yonderaway?”

Garey, as he said this, pointed to the rocks at the foot of the mountain.

“Sac-r-r-re dieu—the Digger!” exclaimed Seguin, his countenance changing expression.

The body lay on a conspicuous point on its face, the crimson skull turned upward and outward, so that it could hardly fail to attract the eye of any one coming in from the plain. Several coyotés had already climbed up on the slab where it lay, and were smelling around it, seemingly not caring to touch the hideous morsel!

“He’s bound to see it, Captain,” added the hunter.

“If so we must take him with the lance, the lasso, or alive. No gun must be fired. They might still hear it; and would be on us, before we could get round the mountain. No; sling your guns! Let those who have lances and lassos get them in readiness.”

“When would you have us make the dash, Captain?”

“Leave that to me. Perhaps he may dismount for the bow; or, if not, he may ride into the spring to water his horse; then we can surround him. If he see the Digger, he may pass up to examine it more closely. In that case we can intercept him without difficulty. Be patient! I will give you the signal.”

During all this time, the Navajo was coming up in a regular gallop! As the dialogue ended, he had got within about three

hundred yards of the spring; and still pressed forward, without slacking his pace. We kept our gaze fixed upon him in breathless silence, eyeing both man and horse.

It was a splendid sight! the horse was a large coal-black mustang, with fiery eyes, and a red open nostril. He was foaming at the mouth, and the white flakes had clouted his neck, counter, and shoulders. He was wet all over, and glittered as he moved with the play of his proud flanks. The rider was naked from the waist up—excepting his helmet and plumes, and some ornaments that glistened on his neck, bosom, and wrists. A tunic-like skirt—bright and embroidered—covered his hips and thighs. Below the knee, his legs were naked, ending in a buckskined moccason, that fitted tightly to the ankle. Unlike the Apachés, there was no paint upon his body; and his bronze complexion shone with the hue of health. His features were noble and warlike, his eye bold and piercing, and his long black hair swept away behind him, mingling with the tail of his horse! He rode upon a Spanish saddle; with his lance poised on the stirrup, and resting lightly against his right arm. His left was thrust through the strap of a white shield; and a quiver with its feathered shafts peeped over his shoulder.

His bow was before him.

It was a splendid sight—both horse and rider, as they rose together over the green swells of the prairie. A picture, more like that of some Homeric hero, than a savage of the “wild West.”

“Waugh!” exclaimed one of the hunters in an undertone, “how they glitter! Look at that ar head-piece—its fairly a-blazin!”

“Aye;” rejoined Garey, “we may thank the piece o’ brass. We’d have been in as ugly a fix as he’s in now, if we hadn’t sighted it in time. What!” continued the trapper, his voice rising with earnestness, “Dacoma, by the Eternal! The second chief of the Navajoes!”

I turned toward Seguin, to witness the effect of this announcement. The Maricopa was leaning over to him, muttering some words in an unknown tongue, and gesticulating with energy. I recognised the name “Dacoma,” and there was an expression of fierce hatred in the chief’s countenance, as he pointed to the advancing horseman!

“Well, then,” answered Seguin, apparently assenting to the wishes of the other, “he shall not escape, whether he sees it or not. But do not use your gun—they are not ten miles off—yonder behind the swell. We can easily surround him. If not, I can overtake him on this horse, and here’s another.”

As Seguin uttered the last speech, he pointed to Moro. “Siience,” he continued, lowering his voice, “Hish-sh-sh?”

The silence became death-like. Each man sat pressing his horse with his knees, as if thus to hold him at rest.

The Navajo had now reached the border of the deserted camp ; and, inclining to the left, he galloped down the line, scattering the wolves as he went. He sat leaning to one side, his gaze searching the ground. When nearly opposite to our ambush, he descried the object of his search ; and, sliding his feet out of the stirrup, guided his horse so as to shave closely past it. Then, without reining in, or even slacking his pace, he bent over, until his plume swept the earth ; and, picking up the bow, swung himself back into the saddle !

“ Beautiful ! ” exclaimed the Bull-fighter.

“ By Gosh ! it’s a pity to kill him,” muttered a hunter ; and a low murmur of admiration was heard among the men.

After a few more springs, the Indian suddenly wheeled, and was about to gallop back, when his eye was caught by the ensanguined object upon the rock. He reined in with a jerk, until the hips of his horse almost rested upon the prairie ; and sat gazing upon the body with a look of surprise !

“ Beautiful ! ” again exclaimed Sanchez, “ Carrambo, beautiful ! ”

It was, in effect, as fine a picture as ever the eye looked upon. The horse with his tail scattered upon the ground—with crest erect, and breathing nostril, quivering under the impulse of his masterly rider—the rider himself, with his glancing helmet and waving plumes—his bronze complexion—his firm and graceful seat—and his eye fixed in the gaze of wonder !

It was as Sanchez had said it, a beautiful picture—a living statue ; and all of us were filled with admiration as we looked upon it. Not one of the party, with perhaps an exception, should have liked to fire the shot, that would have tumbled it from its pedestal !

Horse and man remained in this attitude for some moments. Then the expression of the rider’s countenance suddenly changed. His eye wandered with an inquiring and somewhat terrified look. It rested upon the water—still muddy with the trampling of our horses !

One glance was sufficient ; and, with a quick strong jerk upon the bridle, the savage horseman wheeled, and struck out for the prairie !

Our charging signal had been given at the same instant ; and, springing forward, we shot out of the copsewood in a body.

We had to cross the rivulet. Seguin was some paces in advance, as we rode forward to it. I saw his horse suddenly baulk, stumble over the bank, and roll headlong into the water !

The rest of us went plashing through. I did not stop to look back. I knew that, *now*, the taking of the Indian was life or death to all of us ; and I struck my spur deeply, and strained forward in the pursuit.

For some time we all rode together in a dense “ clump.” When fairly out on the plain, we saw the Indian ahead of us about a dozen lengths of his horse ; and one and all felt with



We closed at full gallop. Our horses almost touched. I levelled, and pulled trigger. The cap snapped upon my pistol! The lance-blade glittered in my eyes. The point was at my breast. Something struck me sharply in the face. It was the ring-loop of a lasso!—PAGE 153.

dismay, that he was keeping his distance, if not actually increasing it!

We had forgotten the condition of our animals. They were faint with hunger, and stiff from standing so long in the ravine. Moreover, they had just drunk to a surfeit.

I soon found that I was forging ahead of my companions. The superior swiftness of Moro gave me the advantage. El Sol was still before me. I saw him circling his lasso. I saw him launch it, and suddenly jerk up. I saw the loop sliding over the hips of the flying mustang. He had missed his aim!

He was re-coiling the rope as I shot past him, and I noticed his look of chagrin and disappointment.

My Arab had now warmed to the chase; and I was soon far ahead of my comrades. I perceived, too, that I was closing upon the Navajo. Every spring brought me nearer, until there were not a dozen lengths between us.

I knew not how to act. I held my rifle in my hands, and could have shot the Indian in the back; but I remembered the injunction of Seguin, and we were now closer to the enemy than ever! I did not know but that we might be in sight of them. I dared not fire.

I was still undecided—whether to use my knife, or endeavour to unhorse the Indian with my clubbed rifle—when he glanced over his shoulder, and saw that I was alone.

Suddenly he wheeled; and throwing his lance to a charge, came galloping back. His horse seemed to work without the rein—obedient to his voice and the touch of his knees!

I had just time to throw up my rifle, and parry the charge—which was a right point. I did not parry it successfully. The blade creased my arm, tearing the flesh. The barrel of my rifle caught in the sling of the lance; and the piece was whipped out of my hands!

The wound, the shock, and the loss of my weapon had discomposed me, in the manège of my horse; and it was some time before I could gain the bridle to turn him. My antagonist had wheeled sooner, as I knew by the “hist” of an arrow that scattered the curls over my right ear. As I faced him again, another was on the string; and the next moment it was sticking through my left arm!

I was now angry; and drawing a pistol from the holster, I cocked it, and galloped forward. I knew it was the only chance for my life.

The Indian, at the same time, dropped his bow; and, bringing his lance to the charge, spurred on to meet me. I was determined not to fire until near and sure of hitting.

We closed at full gallop. Our horses almost touched. I levelled, and pulled trigger. The cap snapped upon my pistol!

The lance-blade glittered in my eyes. Its point was at my breast. Something struck me sharply in the face. It was the

ring-loop of a lasso! I saw it settle over the shoulders of the Indian, falling to his elbows. It tightened as it fell. There was a wild yell—a quick jerk of my antagonist's body—the lance flew from his hands—and the next moment he was plucked out of his saddle, and lying helpless upon the prairie!

His horse met mine, with a concussion that sent both of them to the earth. We rolled and scrambled about, and rose again.

When I came to my feet El Sol was standing over the Navajo, with his knife drawn, and his lasso looped around the arms of his captive!

“The horse! the horse! secure the horse!” shouted Seguin, as he galloped up; and the crowd dashed past me in pursuit of the mustang, that, with trailing bridle, was scouring over the prairie.

In a few minutes the animal was lassoed, and led back to the spot so near being made sacred with my grave.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A DINNER WITH TWO DISHES.

EL SOL, I have said, was standing over the prostrate Indian. His countenance indicated the blending of two emotions—hate and triumph.

His sister at this moment galloped up; and, leaping from her horse, advanced rapidly forward.

“Behold!” said he, pointing to the Navajo chief; “behold the murderer of our mother!”

The girl uttered a short, sharp exclamation, and, drawing a knife, rushed upon the captive.

“No, Luna!” cried El Sol, putting her aside; “no; we are not assassins. That is not revenge. He shall not yet die. We will show him alive to the squaws of the Maricopa. They shall dance the Mamanchic over this great chief; this warrior captive without a wound!”

El Sol uttered these words in a contemptuous tone. The effect was visible on the Navajo.

“Dog of a Coco!” cried he, making an involuntary struggle to free himself; “dog of a Coco! leagued with the pale robbers. Dog!”

“Ha! you remember me, Dacoma? It is well——”

“Dog!” again ejaculated the Navajo, interrupting him; and the words hissed through his teeth, while his eye glared with an expression of the fiercest malignity.

“He! he!” cried Rube, at this moment galloping up; “he! he! that Injun’s as savagerous as a meat-axe Lamm him, d—”

him! Warm his collops wi' the bull-rop; he's warmed my ole mar, Nick syrur him!"

"Let us look to your wound, M. Haller," said Seguin, alighting from his horse, and approaching me, as I thought, with an uneasiness of manner. "How is it? through the flesh? You are safe enough; if, indeed, the arrow has not been poisoned. I fear—El Sol! here, quick, my friend! tell me if this point has been dipped?"

"Let us first take it out," replied the Maricopa, coming up; "we will lose no time by that."

The arrow was sticking through my fore-arm. The barb had pierced through the flesh, until about half of the shaft appeared on the opposite side.

El Sol caught the feather end in both his hands, and snapped it at the lapping. He then took hold of the barb, and drew it gently out of the wound.

"Let it bleed," said he, "till I have examined the point. It does not look like a war-shaft; but the Navajoes use a very subtle poison. Fortunately I possess the means of detecting it, as well as its antidote."

As he said this, he took from his pouch a tuft of raw cotton. With this he rubbed the blood lightly from the blade. He then drew forth a small stone phial; and, pouring a few drops of liquid upon the metal, watched the result.

I waited with no slight feeling of uneasiness. Seguin, too, appeared anxious, and as I knew that he must have witnessed oftentimes the effect of a poisoned arrow, I did not feel very comfortable, seeing him watch the assaying process with so much apparent anxiety. I knew there was danger where he dreaded it.

"M. Haller," said El Sol, at length, "you are in luck this time. I think I may call it luck, for your antagonist has surely something else in his quiver not quite so harmless as this."

"Let me see," he added, and, stepping up to the Navajo, drew another arrow from the quiver that still remained slung upon the Indian's back. After subjecting the blade to a similar test, he exclaimed:—

"I told you so! look at this! green as a plantain! He fired two; where is the other? Comrades, help me to find it. Such a tell-tale as that must not be left behind us."

Several of the men leaped from their horses, and searched for the shaft that had been shot first. I pointed out the direction and probable distance, as near as I could; and in a few moments it was picked up.

El Sol took it, and poured a few drops of his liquid on the blade. It turned green like the other!

"You may thank your saints, M. Haller," said the Coco, "it was not this one made that hole in your arm, else would it have taken all the skill of Doctor Reichter and myself to have saved

you. But what's this? Another wound! Ha! he touched you as he made his right point. Let me look at it."

"I think it is only a scratch."

"This is a strange climate, M. Haller. I have seen such scratches become mortal wounds when not sufficiently valued. Luna! some cotton, sis! I shall endeavour to dress yours, so that you need not fear that result. You deserve that much at my hands. But for *you*, sir, *he* would have escaped me."

"But for *you*, sir, *he* would have killed me."

"Well," replied the Coco, with a smile, "it is possible you would not have come off so well. Your weapon played you false. It is hardly just to expect a man to parry a lance-point with a clubbed rifle; though it was beautifully done. I do not wonder that you pulled trigger in the second joust. I intended doing so myself, had the lasso failed me again. But we were in luck both ways. You must sling this arm for a day or two. Luna, that scarf of yours!"

"No!" said I, as the girl proceeded to unfasten a beautiful scarf which she wore around her waist; "you shall not; I will find something else."

"Here, mister, if this will do," interposed the young trapper, Garey, "you are heartily welcome till it."

As Garey said this, he pulled a coloured handkerchief out of the breast of his hunting shirt, and held it forth.

"You are very kind; thank you!" I replied, although I know on whose account the kerchief was given; "you will be pleased to accept this in return?" and I offered him one of my small revolvers; a weapon that, at that time and in that place, was worth its weight in pearls.

The mountain man knew this, and very gracefully accepted the proffered gift; but, much as he might have prized it, I saw that he was still more gratified with a simple smile that he received from another quarter; and I felt certain that the scarf would soon change owners, at any rate.

I watched the countenance of El Sol, to see if he had noticed or approved of this little bye-play. I could perceive no unusual emotion upon it. He was busy with my wounds; which he dressed, in a manner that would have done credit to a member of the R. C. S.

"Now!" said he, when he had finished, "you will be ready for as much more fighting in a couple of days, at the farthest. You have a bad bridle-arm, M. Haller, but the best horse I ever saw. I do not wonder at your refusing to sell him."

Most of the conversation had been carried on in English; and it was spoken by the Coco chief with an accent and emphasis, to my ear, as good as I had ever heard. He spoke French too, like a Parisian; and it was in this language that he usually conversed with Seguin. I wondered at all this.

The men had remounted with the intention of returning to

the camp. Extreme hunger was now prompting us; and we commenced riding back to partake of the repast so unceremoniously interrupted.

At a short distance from the camp we dismounted; and, picketing our horses upon the grass, walked forward in search for the stray steaks and ribs, we had lately seen in plenty. A new chagrin awaited us. Not a morsel of flesh remained! The Coyotes had taken advantage of our absence, and we could see nothing around us but naked bones! The thighs and ribs of the buffaloes had been polished, as if scraped with a knife. Even the hideous carcass of the digger had become a shining skeleton!

"Wagh!" exclaimed one of the hunters, "wolf now or nothing—Hyar goes!" And the man levelled his rifle.

"Hold!" exclaimed Seguin, seeing the act. "Are you mad, sir?"

"I reckon not, Capt'n," replied the hunter, doggedly bringing down his piece. "We must eat, I s'pose. I see nothin' but them about; an' how are we goin' to get them, 'thout shootin'?"

Seguin made no reply, except by pointing to the bow, which El Sol was making ready.

"Eh-ho!" added the hunter, "yer right Captain. I asks pardon. I had forgot that piece o' bone."

The Coco took an arrow from the quiver, and tried the head with his assaying liquid. It proved to be a hunting shaft; and, adjusting it to the string, he sent it through the body of a white wolf, killing it instantly. He took up the shaft again; and, wiping the feather, shot another, and another, until the bodies of five or six of these animals lay stretched upon the ground.

"Kill a *coyote* when ye're about it," shouted one of the hunters, "gentlemen, like we, oughter have leastwise two courses to our dinner."

The men laughed at this rough sally; and El Sol smiling, again picked up the arrow, and sent it whizzing through the body of one of the coyotés.

"I think that will be enough—for one meal at all events," said El Sol, recovering the arrow, and putting it back into the quiver.

"Aye!" replied the wit, "if we wants more, we kin go back to the larder agin. It's a kind o' meat that eats better fresh anyhow."

"Well, it diz hoss. Wagh! I'm in for a griskin o' the white. Hyar goes."

The hunters, laughing at the humor of their comrades, drew their shining knives, and set about skinning the wolves. The adroitness with which this operation was performed, showed that it was by no means new to them.

In a short time, the animals were stripped of their hides and

quarters; and each man, taking his quarter, commenced roasting it over the fire.

"Fellers! What d'ye call this anyhow? Beef or mutton?" asked one, as they began to eat.

"Wolf mutton I reckon?" was the reply.

"It's dog-gone good eatin' I say—peels off as tender as squall."

"It's some 'at like goat, aint it?"

"Mine tastes more like dog to me."

"It aint bad at all,—better than poor bull any day."

"I'd like it a heap better, if I war sure the thing hadn't been up to yon varmint on the rocks." And the man pointed to the skeleton of the digger!

The idea was horrible; and under other circumstances, would have acted as a sufficient emetic.

"Wagh!" exclaimed a hunter, "ye've most taken away my stammuck. I was going to try the coyoat afore ye spoke. I won't now, for I seed *them* smellin' about him afore we rid off."

"I say, old case, you don't mind it, do ye?"

This was addressed to Rube, who was busy on his rib, and made no reply,

"He? not he," said another, answering for him, "Rube's eat a heap o' queery titbits in his time. Haint ye, Rube?"

"Aye, an' afore yur be as long in the mountains as this child, ee'll be glad to get yur teeth over wuss chawins than wolf-meat—see if 'ee dont."

"Man meat, I reckon?"

"Aye—that's what Rube means."

"Boyees!" said Rube, not heeding the remark, and apparently in good humor, now that he was satisfying his appetite. "What's the nassiest thing leavin' out man-meat—any o' 'ees ever chawed?"

"Woman-meat, I reckon'."

"'Ee chuckle-headed fool! you needn't be so peert now—showin' yur smartness when 'taint called for, nohow."

"Wal, leavin' out man-meat, as you say," remarked one of the hunters, in answer to Rube's question, "a muss-rat's the meanest thing I ever set teeth on."

"I've chawed sage hare—raw at that—" said a second, "an' I don't want to eat any thing that's bitterer."

"Owi's no great eatin'," added a third.

"I've ate skunk," continued a fourth; "an' I've ate sweeter meat in my time."

"*Carajo*," exclaimed a Mexican, "what do you think of monkey? I have dined upon that down south many's the time."

"Wal; I guess monkeys but tough chawins; but I've sharpened my teeth on dry buffler hide, and it wa'nt as tender as it mout a been."

"This child," said Rube, after the rest had given in their experience, "leaving monkey to the beside—hav eat all them critters as has been named yet. Monkey he haint, bein as thur's

none o' 'em in these parts. It may be tough, or it may'nt—it may be bitter, an' it mayn't, for what I knows to the contrary-wise ; but, onces on a time, this nigger chawed a varmint that wa'nt much sweeter, if it wur as sweet."

"What was it, Rube? what was it?" asked several in a breath, curious to know what the old trapper could have eaten, more unpalatable than the viands already named.

"'Twur turkey-buzzart then—that's what *it* wur."

"Turkey-buzzard!" echoed every one.

"'T wa'nt anythin' else."

"Wagh! that was a stinkin' pill, an' no mistake."

"That beats me all hollow."

"And when did ye eat the buzzard, old boy?" asked one, suspecting that there might be a "story" connected with this feat of the earless trapper.

"Ay! tell us that, Rube; tell us!" cried several.

"Wal," commenced Rube, after a moment's silence. - "'Twur about six yeern ago, I wur set afoot on the Arkansas—by the Rapahoes—leastwise two hunder mile below the Big Timmer. The cussed skunks tuk hoss, beaver, an all. He—he!" continued the speaker, with a chuckle, "he-he! they mou't a did as well an let ole Rube alone."

"I reckon that, too," remarked a hunter. "'Taint like they made much out o' that speckelashun. Well—about the buzzard?"

"'Ee see, I wur cleaned out; and left with jest a pair o' leggins—better than two hundred miles from anywhur. Bent's wur the nearest: and I tuk up the river in that direkshun.

"I never seed varmint o' all kinds as shy. They wudn't a-been, d—n 'm! if I'd had my traps; but there wa'nt a critter—from the minners in the water to the bufflers on the perairer—that didn't look like they knowed how this nigger wur fixed. I kud git nuthin' for two days but lizard, and seace at that."

"Lizard's but poor eatin," remarked one.

"'Ee may say that. This hyur thigh jeint's fat cow to it—*it* are."

And Rube, as he said this, made a fresh attack upon the "wolf-mutton."

"I chawed up the old leggins, till I wur as naked as Chimley Rock."

"Gollies! was it winter?"

"No. 'Twur calf-time, and warm enuf for that matter. I didn't mind the want o' the buckskin thataway, but I kud a eat more o' it.

"The third day I struck a town o' sand rats. This nigger's har wur longer then than it are now. I made snares o' it, and trapped a wheen o' the rats; but *they* grew shy too, d—n 'em! and I had to quit that spec'lashun. This wur the third day from the time I'd been set down; and I wur getting nasty weak

on it. I gin to think that the time wur come for this child to go under.

"'Twur a leetle arter sun-up, and I wur sittin on the bank, when I seed somethin' queery floatin down the river. When it kim closter, I seed it wur the karkidge of a buffler—calf at that—an a couple o' buzzarts flappin about on the thing, pickin its peepers out. 'Twur far out, and the water deep; but I'd made up my mind to fetch it ashore. I wa'n't long in strippin' I reckon."

Here the hunters interrupted Rube's story with a laugh.

"I tuk the water, and swum out. I kud smell the thing afore I wur half way; and when I got near it, the birds mizzled. I wur soon clost up, and seed, at a glimp, that the calf wur as rotten as punk."

"What a pity!" exclaimed one of the hunters.

"I wa'n't a gwine to have my swim for nuthin; so I tuk the tail in my teeth, and swum back for the shore. I hadn't made three strokes till the tail pulled out!

"I then swum round ahint the karkidge, and pushed it afore me, till I got it landed, high and dry upon a sand bar. 'Twur like to fall to pieces, when I pulled it out o' the water. 'Twa'n't eatable nohow!"

Here Rube took a fresh mouthful of the wolf-mutton, and remained silent, until he had masticated it. The men had become interested in the story, and waited with impatience. At length he proceeded—

"I seed the buzzarts still flying about, an' fresh ones a comin'. I tuk a idee that I mout git my claws upon some o' 'em. So I lay down clost up agin the calf, and played possum."

"I wa'nt long that-away when the birds begun to light on the sand bar, an' a big cock kim floppin up to the karkidge. Afore he kud flop off agin I grubbed him by the legs."

"Hooraw! well done, by Gollies!"

"The cussed thing wur nearly as stinkin' as t'other, but it were die dog—buzzart or calf—so I skinned the buzzart."

"And ate it?" inquired an impatient listener.

"No-o," slowly drawled Rube, apparently "miffed" at being thus interrupted. "It ate *me*."

The laugh that followed this retort restored the old trapper to good humor again.

"Did you go it raw, Rube?" asked one of the hunters.

"How could he do otherwise? He hadn't a spark o' fire, an' nothing to make one out of."

"'Ee d--d fool!" exclaimed Rube, turning savagely on the last speaker.

"I kud make a fire if thur wa'nt a spark nearer than h—ll!"

A wild yell of laughter followed this dreadful speech, and it was some minutes before the trapper recovered his temper sufficiently to resume his narration.

"The rest o' the birds," continued he, at length, "seein' the ole cock rubbed out, grew shy, and kep away on t'other side o' the river. 'Twa'nt no use tryin' that dodge over agin. Jest then I spied a coyoat comin' lopin down the bank, and another follerin upon his heels, and two or three more on the same trail. I know'd it wud be no joke gruppin one o' them by the leg; but I made up my mind to try it; an' I lay down jest as afore, clost up to the calf. 'Twur no go. The cunnin' things seed the float stick, an' kept clur o' the karkidge. I wur a-gwine to caché under some brush that wur by, an' I begun to carry it up, when all ev a suddint I tuk a fresh idee in my head. I seed thur wur drift-wood a plenty on the bank; so I fatched it up, an' built a pentrap roun' about the calf. In the twinklin o' a goat's eye, I had six varmints in the trap."

"Hooraw! Ye war safe then, old hos."

"I tuk a wheen o' stones, and then clomb up on the pen, an' killed the hul kit on 'em. Lord boyees! 'ee never seed sich a snappin and snarlin an' jumpin an' yowltin, as when I peppered them donicks down on 'em. He! he! he! ho! ho! hoo!"

And the smoky old sinner chuckled with delight at the remembrance of his adventure.

"You reached Bent's then safe enough, I reckon?"

"'Ee—es. I skinned the critter wi' a sharp stone, an' made me a sort o' shirt an' leggins. This niggur had no mind, comin' in naked, to gi' them thur joke at the Fort. I packed enough o' the wolf meat to last me up, an' I got thur in less'n a week."

"Bill wur thur himself; an' 'ee all know Bill Bent. *He* know'd *me*. I wa'nt in the Fort a half an hour till I wur spick-span in new buckskins, wi' a new rifle; an' that rifle wur Targuts, now afore ye."

"Ha! you got Targuts thar then?"

"I got Targuts thur then, an a gun she are. He! he! he! 'Twa'nt long arter I got her, till I tried her. He! he! he! ho! ho! hoo!"

And the old trapper went off into another fit of chuckling.

"What are ye laughin' at now, Rube?" asked one of his comrades.

"He! he! he! What am I larfin at! He! he! he! ho! ho! That are the crisp o' the joke. He! he! he! What am I larfin at?"

"Yes, tell us, man!"

"It are this, then, I'm a larfin at," replied Rube, sobering down a little. "I wa'n't at Bent's three days, when who do'ee think shed kum to the Fort?"

"Who? Maybe the Rapahoos?"

"Them same Injuns; an' the very niggurs as set me afoot. They come to the fort to trade with Bill, and thur I sees both my ole mar an' rifle!"

"You got them back, then?"

“That wur likely. Thur wur a when o’ mountain men thur at the time, that wa’nt the fellers to see this child put down on the perairer for nuthin. Yander’s the critter!” and Rube pointed to the old mare. “The rifle I gin to Bill, an’ kep Targuts instead—seein she wur a better gun.”

“So you got square with the Rapahoes?”

“That jest rests on what ’ee ’ud call squar. Do ’ee see these hyar nicks—them standing sep’rate?”

And the trapper pointed to a row of small notches cut in the stock of his rifle.

“Ay, ay!” cried several men in reply.

“Thur’s five o’ ’em, aint thur?”

“One—two—three—yes, five.”

“*Them’s Rapahoes!*”

Rube’s story was ended.

CHAPTER XXX.

BLINDING THE PURSUER—A TRAPPER'S RUSE.

By this time, the men had finished eating, and now began to gather around Seguin, for the purpose of deliberating on what course we should pursue. One had already been sent up to the rocks to act as a vidette, and warn us, in case any of the Indians should be descried upon the prairie.

We all felt that we were still in a dilemma. The Navajo was our captive, and his men would come to seek for him. He was too important a personage—second chief of the nation—to be abandoned without a search; and his own followers—nearly half of the tribe—would certainly be back to the spring. Not finding him there, should they not discover our tracks, they would return upon the war trail, to their country.

This, we all saw, would render our expedition impracticable, as Dacoma's band alone outnumbered us; and should we meet them in their mountain fastnesses, we could have no chance of escape.

For some time, Seguin remained silent, with his eyes fixed on the ground. He was evidently tracing out in his mind some plan of action. None of the hunters chose to interrupt him.

"Comrades!" said he at length, "this is an unfortunate *coup*, but it could not be avoided. It is well it is no worse. As it is, we must alter our plans. They will be sure to return on his track, and follow their own trail back to the Navajo towns. What then? Our band cannot either come on to the Pinon, or cross

the war-trail at any point. They would discover our tracks to a certainty."

"Why can't we go straight up to whar the rest's cached, and then take round by the old mine? That won't interfere with the war-trail nohow."

This was proposed by one of the hunters.

"Vaya!" rejoined a Mexican, "we should meet the Navajoes just when we had got to their town! Carrai! that would never do, amigo. There wouldn't many of us get back again! Santissima! No."

"We aint obleeged to meet them," argued the first speaker. "They're not a goin' to stop at thar town when they find the nigger haint been back."

"It is true," said Seguin; "They will not remain there. They will doubtless return on the war-trail again; but I know the country by the mine."

"So do I—so do I," cried several voices.

"There is no game," continued Seguin. "We have no provisions; it is therefore impossible for us to go that way."

"We couldn't go it, nohow."

"We should starve before we had got through the Mimbres."

"Thar's no water that way."

"No, by Gosh! Not enough to make a drink for a sand rat."

"We must take our chances, then;" said Seguin.

Here he paused thoughtfully, and with a gloomy expression of countenance.

"We must cross the trail," he continued, "and go by the Prieto, or—abandon the expedition."

The word "Prieto," in opposition to the phrase, "abandon the expedition," put the hunters to their wit's end for invention; and plan after plan was proposed—all however ending in the probability—in fact certainty—that if adopted, our trail would be discovered by the enemy, and followed up before we could escape back to the Del Norte. They were, therefore, one after another rejected.

During all this discussion, old Rube had not said a word. The earless trapper was sitting upon the prairie—squat on his hams—tracing out some lines with his bowie; and apparently laying out the plan of a fortification!

"What are ye doin', old hoss?" inquired one of his comrades.

"My hearin aint as good as 'twar, afore I kim into this cussed country; but I thought I heerd some o'ees say jest now, we cudn't cross the Pash trail 'ithout bein follered in two days. Thats a dod-rotted lie! *It are.*"

"How are ye goin' to prove it, hoss?"

"Chut, man! yur tongue wags like a beaver's tail in flood time."

"Can you suggest any way that it can be done, Rube? I confess I see none"

As Seguin made this appeal, all eyes were turned upon the trapper.

"Why, Cap., I kin surgest my own notion 'o the thing. It may be right, and it mayn't be right, but if it wur follered out, thur'll be neither Pash nor Navagh that'll smell where we go for a week. If they diz, 'ee may cut my ears off."

This was a favourite joke with Rube, and the hunters only laughed. Seguin himself could not restrain a smile; as he requested the speaker to proceed.

"Fust and foremost then," said Rube, "thur not a-gwine to come arter that niggur in less than two days."

"How can you tell that?"

"This way." " 'Ec see he's only second chief, an' they kin go on well enough 'ithout him. But that ain't it. The Injun forgot his bow—white at that. Now 'ee all knows as well as this child, that that's a big disgrace in the eyes o' Injuns."

"You're right about that, hoss," remarked one.

"Wal—so the ole coon thinks. Now, 'ee see, its plain as Pike's peak, that he kim away back 'ithout tellin' any o' the rest a syllabub about it. He'd not let 'em know ev he kud help it."

"That is not improbable," said Seguin. "Proceed Rube!"

"More'n that," continued the trapper, "I'll stake high, thet he ordered them not to foller him; afeered thet some on 'em mout see what he kim for. If he'd a thought they knew or suspected, he'd a sent some other, and not kum himself; that's what *he'd* a done."

This was all probable enough; and with the knowledge which the scalp hunters possessed of the Navajo character, they one and all believed it to be so.

"I'm sartint they'll kum back," continued Rube, "that are, his half o' the tribe, anyways; but it'll be three days clur, an' well up till another, afore they drinks Peenyun water."

"But they would strike our trail the day after."

"If we wur green fools enough to let 'em, they wud."

"How can we prevent that?" asked Seguin.

"Easy as fallin' off a log."

"How? how?" inquired several at once.

"By puttin' them on another scent, do 'ee see?"

"Yes! but in what way can we affect that?" inquired Seguin.

"Why, Cap., yur tumble has surely dumbfoundered ye. I wud think less o' these other dummies not seein' at a glimp how we kin do it."

"I confess, Rube," replied Seguin with a smile, "I do not perceive how we can mislead them."

"Wal, then," continued the trapper, with a chuckle of satisfaction at his own superior prairie-craft, "this child's a-gwine to tell 'ee how 'ee kin put them on a track that'll jest carry them hellwards."

"Hooraw for you, old hoss!"

"'Ee sec a quiver on that Injun's back?"

"Aye! aye!" cried several voices.

"It's full o' arrows, or pretty near it, I reckon'."

"It is—Well?"

"Wal, then, let some o' us ride the Injun's mustang—any other critter thet's got the same track 'll do—away down the Pash trail, and stick them things pointin south'art; an' if the Navagh don't travel that-away till they comes up with the Pashes, 'ee may have this child's har for a plug o' the wust Kaintucky terbaccer."

"That'll fool them!"

"Viva!" "he's right—he's right!" "Hooraw for old Rube!" and various similar exclamations were uttered by the hunters.

"Taint needcessary for them to know why *he* shud a tuk that track. They'll know his arrows; that's enuf. By the time they git's back, wi' thur fingers in thur meat-traps, we'll hev start enough to carry us from h—— to Hackensack."

"Ay, that we will by Gollies!"

"The band," continued Rube, "needn't come to the Peenyun spring no howsomever. They kin cross the war-trail higher up to'rst the Heely, and meet us on t'other side o' the mountain, whur thur's a grist o' game—both cattle an' buffler. A plenty o' both on the old mission lands, I'll be boun'. We'd hev to go thur anyways. Thur's no hopes o' meetin' the buffler this side, arter the splurry them Injuns has gin 'em."

"That is true enough," said Seguin. "We must go round the mountain before we can expect to fall in with the buffalo. The Indian hunt has chased them clear off the Llanos. Come then! Let us set about our work at once. We have yet two hours before sunset. What would you do first, Rube? you have given the plan—I will trust to you for the details."

"Why in my opeenyun, Cap., the fust thing to be did, are to send a man as straight as he can gallip to whur the bands cachéd. Let him fotch them acrost the trail."

"Where should they cross, do you think?"

"About twenty mile north o' hyur thur's a dry ridge, an' a good grist o' loose donicks. If they cross, as they oughter, they needn't make much sign. I kud take a train o' Bent's wagons over, that 'ud puzzle deaf Smith to follow them. I kud."

"I will send a man off instantly. Here, Sanchez! you have a good horse, and know the ground. It is not over twenty miles to where they are cachéd. Bring them along the ridge, and with caution as you have heard. You will find us round the north point of the mountain. You can travel all night, and be up with us early in the morning. Away!"

The torero, without making any answer, drew his horse from the picket, leaped into the saddle, and rode off at a gallop towards the north-west.

"It is fortunate," said Seguin, looking after him, for some mo-

ments, "that they have trampled the ground about here, else the tracks made in our late encounter would certainly have told tales upon us."

"Thur's no danger about that," rejoined Rube; "but when we rides from hyur, Cap'n, we musn't foller *their* trail. They'd soon sight our back tracks. We had best keep up yander among the loose donicks." Rube pointed to the shingle that stretched north and south along the foot of the mountain.

"Yes, that shall be our course. We can leave this without making any tracks. What next?"

"The next idea are, to get rid of yon piece o' machin'ry," and the trapper, as he spoke, nodded in the direction of the skeleton.

"True! I had forgotten it. What shall we do with it?"

"Bury it," advised one.

"Wagh! no. Burn it!" cried another.

"Aye, that's best," said a third.

The last suggestion was adopted.

The skeleton was brought down—the stains of the blood were carefully rubbed from the rocks—the skull was shivered with a tomahawk—and the joints were broken in pieces. The whole mass was then flung upon the fire, and pounded down among numerous bones of the buffalo, already simmering in the cinders. An anatomist only could have detected the presence of a human skeleton!

"Now, Rube; the arrows?"

"If 'ee'll leave that to me an' Bill Garey, I think them two niggurs kin fix 'em so as to bamfoozle any Injuns thur is in these parts. We'll have to go four mile or tharabout; but we'll git back by the time 'ee have filled yur gourds, an' got yur traps ready for skeetin."

"Very well! take the arrows."

"Four's gobs for us!" said Rube, taking that number from the quiver. "Keep the rest. 'Ee'll want more wolf-meat afore we start. Thur's not a tail o' anythin' else till we git clur roun' the mountain yander. Billee! throw your ugly props over that Narvagh mustang. Putty hoss too; but I wouldn't giv my old mar for a hul cavayard o' him. Gi's a sprig o' the black feather."

Here the old trapper drew one of the ostrich feathers out of the helmet of the Navajo chief, and continued—

"Boyees! take care o' the ole mar till I kum back, an' don't let her stampede do 'ee hear? I wants a blanket. Don't all speak at oncest!"

"Here, Rube, here!" cried several, holding out their blankets

"E'er a one 'll do. We needs three. Bill's and mine and another'n. Hyur, Billee! take these afore ye. Now ride down the Pash trail three hundred yards, or tharabout, and then pull up. Don't take the beaten pad, but keep alongside, and make big tracks. Gallop, d—n ye!"

The young hunter laid his quirt to the flanks of the mustang, and started at full gallop along the Apaché trail.

When he had ridden a distance of three hundred yards, or so, he halted to wait for further directions from his comrade.

Old Rube, at the same time, took an arrow; and fastening a piece of ostrich feather to the barb, adjusted it on one of the upright poles which the Indians had left standing on the camp ground. It was placed in such a manner, that the head pointed southward in the direction of the Apaché trail; and was so conspicuous with the black feather, that no one coming in from the Llanos could fail to see it.

This done, the old trapper followed his companion on foot, keeping wide out from the trail, and making his tracks with great caution. On coming up with Garey, he stuck a second arrow in the ground—its point also inclined to the south, and so that it could be seen from the former one.

Garey then galloped forward—*keeping on the trail*—while Rube struck out again to the open prairie, and advanced in a line parallel to it.

Having ridden a distance of two or three miles, Garey slackened his pace, and put the mustang to a slow walk. A mile farther on he again halted, and held his horse at rest, *in the beaten path!*

Rube now came up, and spread the three blankets lengthways along the ground, and leading westward from the trail. Garey dismounted; and led the animal gently on the blankets.

As its feet rested on two at a time, each, as it became the rear-most, was taken up, and spread again in front; and this was repeated, until they had got the mustang some fifty lengths of himself out into the prairie. The movement was executed with an adroitness equal to that which characterized the feat of Sir Walter Raleigh.

Garey now took up the blankets, and remounting commenced riding slowly back by the foot of the mountain; while Rube returned to the trail, and placed a third arrow at the point where the mustang had parted from it. He then proceeded south as before. One more was yet needed to make doubly sure.

When he had gone about half a-mile, we saw him stoop over the trail—rise up again—cross toward the mountain foot, and follow the path taken by his companion. The work was done; the finger-posts were set: *the ruse* was complete!

El Sol, meanwhile, had been busy. Several wolves were killed and skinned; and the meat packed in their skins. The gourds were filled; our captive tied on a mule; and we stood waiting the return of the trappers.

Seguin had resolved to leave two men at the spring as videttes. They were to keep their horses by the rocks, and supply them with the mule-bucket—so as to make no fresh tracks at the water. One was to remain constantly on an eminence, and watch the

prairie with the glass. They could thus descry the returning Navajoes, in time themselves to escape unobserved along the foot of the mountain. They were then to halt at a place ten miles to the north, where they could still have a view of the plain. There they were to remain until they had ascertained what direction the Indians should take after leaving the spring; when they were to hurry forward and join the band with their tidings.

All these arrangements having been completed, as Rube and Garey came up, we mounted our horses; and rode by a circuitous route for the mountain foot. When close in, we found the path strewn with loose cut-rock—upon which the hoofs of our animals left no track. Over this, we rode forward—heading to the north, and keeping in a line nearly parallel to the “war trail.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

A BUFFALO "SURROUND."

A MARCH of twenty miles brought us to the place where we expected to be joined by the band. We found a small stream heading in the Pinon range, and running westward to the San Pedro. It was fringed with cotton-trees and willows, and with grass in abundance for our horses. Here we camped, kindled a fire in the thicket, cooked our wolf mutton, ate it, and went to sleep.

The band came up in the morning having travelled all night. Their provisions were spent as well as ours; and, instead of resting our wearied animals, we pushed on through a pass in the Sierra, in hopes of finding game on the other side.

About noon we debouched through the mountain pass into a country of "openings"—small prairies, bounded by jungly forests, and interspersed with timber "islands." These prairies were covered with tall grass, and buffalo "sign" appeared as we rode into them. We saw their "roads," "chips," and "wallows."

We saw, moreover, the "bois de vache" of the wild cattle. We would soon meet with one or the other.

We were still on the stream—by which we had camped the night before—and we made a "noon halt," to refresh our animals.

The hirsute forms of the cacti were around us, bearing red and yellow fruit in abundance. We plucked the pears of the pitahaya, and ate them greedily; we found service berries, yampa, and roots of the *pomme blanche*. We dined on fruits and vegetables of various sorts, indigenous only to this wild region.

But the stomachs of the hunters longed for their favorite food—

the "hump ribs," and "boudins," of the buffalo—and after a halt of two hours, we moved forward through the openings.

We had ridden about an hour among *chapparal*, when Rube—who was some paces in advance, acting as guide—turned in his saddle, and pointed downward.

"What's there, Rube?" demanded Seguin, in a low voice.

"Fresh track, Cap'n—buffler."

"What number, can you guess?"

"A gang o' fifty or tharabout. They've tuk through the thicket yanderaway. I kin sight the sky. Thur's clur ground not fur from us; an I'd stake a plew thur in it. I think it's a small perairer, Cap."

"Halt here, men!" said Seguin; "halt and keep silent. Ride forward, Rube. Come, M. Haller, you're fond of hunting—come along with us!"

I followed the guide and Seguin through the bushes—like them riding slowly and silently.

In a few minutes we reached the edge of a prairie covered with long grass. Peering cautiously through the leaves of the prosopis, we had a full view of the open ground. The buffaloes were on the plain!

It was as Rube had rightly conjectured, a small prairie, about a mile and a-half in width—closed in on all sides by a thick *chapparal*. Near the centre was a "motte" of heavy timber growing up from a leafy underwood. A spur of willows running out from the timber, indicated the presence of water.

"Thur's a spring yander," muttered Rube. "They've jest been a coolin thur noses at it."

This was evident enough—for some of the animals, were, at the moment, walking out of the willows: and we could see the wet clay upon their flanks, and the saliva glancing down from their jaws.

"How will we get at them, Rube?" asked Seguin; "can we approach them do you think?"

"I doubt not, Cap. The grass 'ud hardly kiver us; an thur a-gwine out o' range o' the bushes."

"How then? We cannot run them—there's not room. They would be into the thicket at the first dash. We would lose every hoof of them."

"Sartin as Scriptor."

"What is to be done?"

"This niggur sees but one other plan as kin be used jest at this time."

"What is it?"

"Surround."

"Right—if we can do that. How is the wind?"

"Dead as an Injun wi' his head cut off," replied the trapper; taking a small feather out of his cap and tossing it in the air.

"See Cap., it falls plum!"

"It does truly."

"We kin easy git roun' them bufflers afore they wind us; and we hev men enough to make a picket fence about them. We kin hardly set about it too soon, Cap. Thur a movin' torst the edge yander."

"Let us divide the men ti.en," said Seguin, turning his horse, "you can guide one half of them to their stands. I will go with the other. M. Haller, you had better remain where you are. It is as good a stand as you can get. Have patience. It may be an hour before all are placed. When you hear the bugle, you may gallop forward and do your best. If we succeed, you will have sport and a good supper—what, I suppose, you feel the need of by this time."

So saying, Seguin left me, and rode back to the men, followed by old Rube.

It was their purpose to separate the band into two parties—each taking opposite directions—and drop a man here and there, at regular intervals around the prairie. They would keep in the thicket while on the march; and only discover themselves at a given signal. In this way—should the buffaloes allow time for the execution of the movement—we would be almost certain of securing the whole gang.

As soon as Seguin had left me, I looked to my rifle and pistols, putting on a set of fresh caps. After that, having nothing else to occupy me, I remained seated in my saddle—eyeing the animals, as they fed unconscious of danger. I was full of anxiety lest some clumsy fellow might discover himself too soon, and thus spoil our anticipated sport.

After awhile I could see the birds flying up from the thicket; and the screaming of the blue jay indicated to me the progress of the "surround."

Now and then, an old bull, on the skirt of the herd, would toss up his shaggy mane—snuff the wind—and strike the ground fiercely with his hoof—evidently laboring under a suspicion that all was not right!

The others did not seem to heed these demonstrations; but kept on quietly cropping the luxuriant grama.

I was thinking how nicely we were going to have them in the trap, when an object caught my eye, just emerging from the motte. It was a buffalo calf; and I saw that it was proceeding to join the gang. I thought it somewhat strange that it should be separated from the rest, for the calves—trained by their mothers to know the wolf—usually keep up with the herd.

"It has stayed behind at the spring," thought I. "Perhaps the others pushed it from the water; and it could not drink 'until they had gone."

I fancied that it moved clumsily—as if it were wounded—but it was passing through the long grass; and I could not get a good view of it.

There was a pack of coyotés—there always is—speaking a'round the herd. These perceiving the calf as it came out of the timber, made an instant and simultaneous attack upon it. I could see them skipping around it; and fancied I could hear their fierce snarling. But the calf appeared to fight its way through the thick of them; and, after a short while, I saw it close in to its companions, where I lost sight of it among the others.

“A game young bull!” soliloquized I, and again I ran my eye around the skirting of the chapparral to watch how the hunters were getting forward with the “surround.” I could perceive the flashing of brilliant wings over the bramble; and hear the shrill voices of the jay-birds. Judging by these, I concluded that the men were moving slowly enough. It was half-an hour since Seguin had left me, and I could perceive that they were not half way round as yet.

I began to make calculations as to how long I would have to wait, soliloquizing as follows:—

“Diameter of the prairie—a mile and a half. It is a circle. Three times that? Four miles and a half. Phew! I will not hear the signal in much less than an hour. I must be patient then and—What! The brutes are lying down! Good! There is no danger now of their making off. We will have rare sport! One—two—three—six of them down! It must be the heat, and the water. They have drunk too much—there goes another!—and filled their bellies too full of the rich grama. Lucky devils! They have nothing else to do but eat, while I—No. 8 down—well! I hope to eat soon too. What an odd way they have of coming to the ground! How different from any thing of the bovine tribe I have yet observed! I have never seen buffaloes “quieting” down before; and it is not a very quiet plan they take. One would think that they were falling—as if shot! Two more alongside the rest! They will soon be all upon the turf. So much the better. We will gallop up, before they can get to their feet again. Oh! that I could hear that horn!”

And thus I went on rambling from thought to thought, and listening for the signal—although I knew that it could not be given for some time yet.

The buffaloes kept moving slowly onward, browsing as they went, and continuing to lie down one after another. I thought it strange, their stretching themselves thus successively; but I had observed farm cattle do the same; and I was at that time but little acquainted with the habits of the buffalo. Some of them appeared to toss about on the ground, and kick violently! I had heard of a peculiarity of these animals, termed “wallowing.” “They are at it,” thought I. I wished much to have a clearer view of this curious exercise, but the high grass prevented me. I could only see their shaggy shoulders, and occasionally their hoofs kicking up over the sward.

I watched their movements with great interest—now feeling secure that the “surround” would be complete, before they would think of rising.

At length the last one of the gang followed the example of his companions, and dropped over.

They were now all upon their sides—half buried in the bunch grass. I thought I noticed the calf still upon its feet; but, at that moment, the bugle sounded; and a simultaneous cheer broke from all sides of the prairie.

I pressed the spur to my horse’s flank, and dashed out into the open plain. Fifty others had done the same—yelling as they shot out of the thicket!

With my reins resting on my left fingers, and my rifle thrown crosswise, I galloped forward, filled with the wild excitement that such an adventure imparts. I was cocked and ready—resolved upon having the first shot.

It was but a short distance, from where I had started, to the nearest buffalo. I was soon within range—my horse flying like an arrow.

“Are the animals asleep! I am within ten paces of him, and still he stirs not! I will fire at him as he lies.”

I raised my rifle, levelled it, and was about to pull the trigger, when something red gleamed before my eyes. It was blood!

I lowered the piece with a feeling of terror; and commenced dragging upon the rein; but, before I could pull up, I was carried into the midst of the prostrate herd. Here my horse suddenly stopped; and I sat in my saddle as if spell bound. I was under the influence of a superstitious awe. Blood was before me, and around me! Turn which way I would, my eye rested upon blood!

My comrades closed in—yelling as they came—but their yelling suddenly ceased; and one by one reined up, as I had done, with looks of consternation and wonder!

It was not strange—at such a sight. Before us lay the bodies of the buffaloes. They were all dead, or quivering in the last throes! Each had a wound above the brisket, and from this the red stream gurgled out, and trickled down their still panting sides! Blood welled from their mouths, and out of their nostrils. Pools of it were filtering through the prairie turf: and clotted gouts—flung out by the struggling hoof—sprinkled the grass around them!

O God! What could it mean?

“Wagh!” “Santissima!” “Sacre Dieu!” were the exclamations of the hunters.

“Surely no mortal hand has done this?”

“It wa’n’t nuthin’ else,” eried a well known voice, “ev yur call an Injun a mortal. ?Twur a rid skin, and this child-Lookee-e!”

I heard the click of a rifle along with this abrupt exclamation.

tion. I turned suddenly. Rube was in the act of levelling his piece. My eye involuntarily followed the direction of the barrel. There was an object moving in the grass!

"A buffalo that still kicks," thought I, as I saw the mass of dark brown hair, "he is going to finish him—it is the calf!"

I had scarcely made the observation, when the animal reared up on its hind legs, uttering a wild human scream—the shaggy hide was flung off—and a naked savage appeared, holding out his arms in an attitude of supplication!

I could not have saved him. The rifle had cracked. The ball had sped. I saw it piercing his brown breast, as a drop of sleet strikes upon the pane of glass; the red spout gushed forth; and the victim fell forward upon the body of one of the animals!

"Wagh! Rube," exclaimed one of the men, "why didn't ye give him time to skin the meat? He mout as well a done that when he war about it;" and the man laughed at his savage jest.

"Lookee hyur, boyees!" said Rube, pointing to the motte, "if 'ee look sharp, yur mout scare up another calf yander-away! I'm a gwine to see arter this Injun's har, I am."

The hunters at the suggestion, galloped off to surround the motte.

I felt a degree of irresolution and disgust at this cool shedding of blood. I drew my rein almost involuntarily, and moved forward to the spot where the savage had fallen. He lay, back uppermost. He was naked to the breech-clout. There was the debouchure of a bullet below the left shoulder; and the black red stream was trickling down his ribs. The limbs still quivered, but it was in the last spasms of parting life!

The hide in which he had disguised himself, lay piled up where it had been flung. Beside it were a bow and several arrows. The latter were crimsoned to the notch—the feathers steeped in blood and clinging to the shafts. They had pierced the huge bodies of the animals, passing through and through. Each arrow had taken many lives.

The old trapper rode up to the corpse; and leisurely mounted from his mare.

"Fifty dollars a plew," he muttered, unsheathing his knife, and stooping over the body. "It's more 'n I got for my own. It beats beaver all hollow. D—n beaver! say this child. Plew a plug—aint worth trappin if the varmint war as thick as grass jumpers in calf-time. Ee-up nigger!" he continued grasping the long hair of the savage, and holding the face upward, "Let's get a squint at your phisog. Hooraw! Coyoté Pash! Hooraw!"

And a gleam of vengeful triumph lit up the countenance of the strange old man, as he uttered these wild exclamations.

"A pash is he?" asked one of the hunters, who had remained near the spot.

“That he are—Coyoté Pash. The very niggurs that bobtailed this child’s ears—d—n ’em! I kin swar to thur ugly picters anywhur I git my peepers upon ’em. Woughwough! ole wolfy! got ’ee at last, has he? Yur a beauty, an’ no mistake.”

So saying, he gathered the long crown locks in his left hand; and with two slashes of his knife—held quarte and tierce—he cut a circle around the top of the head, as perfect as if it had been traced by compasses! He then took a turn of the hair over his wrist—giving it a quick jerk outward. At the same instant, the keen blade passed under the skin, and the scalp was taken!

“Counts six,” he continued, muttering to himself, while placing the scalp in his belt, “six at fifty—three hundred shiners for Pash har: d—n beaver trappin! say I.”

Having secured the bleeding trophy, he wiped his knife upon the hair of one of the buffaloes; and proceeded to cut a small notch in the wood-work of his gun, alongside five others that had been carved there already. These six notches stood for Apachés only; but as my eye wandered along the outlines of the piece, I saw that there were many other columns in that terrible register:

CHAPTER XXXII.

ANOTHER "COUP."

A SHOT ringing in my ears caused me to withdraw my attention from the proceedings of the earless trapper. As I turned I saw a blue cloud floating away over the prairie; but I could not tell at what the shot had been fired. Thirty or forty of the hunters had surrounded the motte; and, halted, were sitting in their saddles in a kind of irregular circle. They were still at some distance from the timber—as if keeping out of arrow-range. They held their guns crosswise; and were shouting to one another.

It was improbable that the savage was alone. Doubtless, there were some of his companions in the thicket. There could not be many, however, for the underwood was not large enough to conceal more than a dozen bodies; and the keen eyes of the hunters were piercing it in every direction.

They reminded me of so many huntsmen in a gorge, waiting the game to be sprung; but here, O God! the game was human!

It was a terrible spectacle. I looked towards Seguin, thinking that he might interfere to prevent the barbarous battue. He noticed my inquiring glance; and turned his face from me. I fancied that he felt ashamed of the work in which his followers were engaged; but the killing or capture of whatever Indians might be in the motte, had now become a necessary measure; and I knew that any remonstrance of mine would be disregarded. As for the men themselves they would have laughed at it. This was their pastime—their profession; and I am certain that, at that moment, their feelings were not very different

from those which would have actuated them, had they been driving a bear from his den. They were perhaps a trifle more intense; certainly not more inclined towards mercy.

I reined up my horse, and awaited with painful emotions the *dénouement* of this savage drama.

"Vaya Irlandes! What did you see?" inquired one of the Mexicans, appealing to Barney. I saw by this that it was the Irishman who had fired the shot.

"A rid skin, by japers!" replied the latter.

"Warnt it your own shadow ye sighted in the water?" cried a hunter, jeeringly.

"May be it was the divil, Barney?"

"In trath, frinds, I saw a somethin that looked mighty like him, and I kilt it too."

"Ha! ha! Barney has killed the devil! ha! ha!"

"Wagh!" exclaimed the trapper, spurring his horse toward the thicket; "the fool saw nothin. I'll chance it anyhow."

"Stop, comrade!" cried the hunter Garey; "Let's take a safer plan. Red-head's right. Thar's Injun in them bushes, whether he see it or not; that skunk warnt by himself, I reckon; try this a-way."

The young trapper dismounted, and turned his horse broadside to the bushes. Keeping on the outside he commenced walking the animal in a spiral ring that gradually closed in upon the clump. In this way his body was screened; and his head only could be seen above theommel of his saddle, over which he rested his rifle cocked and ready.

Several others, observing this movement on the part of Garey, dismounted and followed his example.

A deep silence prevailed, as they narrowed the diameters of their circling courses.

In a short time they were close into the motte; yet still no arrow whizzed out! Was there no one there? So it seemed; and the men pushed fearlessly into the thicket!

I watched all this with excited feelings. I began to hope there was no one in the bushes. I listened to every sound. I heard the snapping of the twigs, and the muttering of the men. There was a moment's silence as they pushed eagerly forward.

Then I heard a sudden exclamation, and a voice calling out,

"Dead red-skin! Hurrah for Barney!"

"Barney's bullet through him, by the holys!" cried another.

"Hilloo old sky-blue! Come hyar and see what ye've done!"

The rest of the hunters, along with the *ci devant* soldier, now rode forward to the copse. I moved slowly after. On coming up I saw them dragging the body of an Indian into the open ground—a naked savage like the other. He was dead, and they were preparing to scalp him.

"Come, now, Barney!" cried one of the men in a joking manner, "the bar's yourn. Why don't ye off wid it, man?"

"It's moine dev yez say?" asked Barney, appealing to the speaker.

"Sartinly, you killed him—it's your'n by right."

"An' is it raally worth fifty dollars?"

"Good as wheat for that."

"Wud yez be so frindly thin as to cut it aff for me?"

"O, sartinly, wid all the plizyer of life," replied the hunter, imitating Barney's accent, at the same time severing the scalp, and handing it to him.

Barney took the hideous trophy; and I fancied that he did not feel very proud of it. Poor Celt! He may have been guilty of many a breach in the laws of garrison discipline, but it was evident, that this was his first lesson in the letting of human blood!

The hunters now dismounted, and commenced trampling the thicket through and through. The search was most minute, for there was still a mystery. An extra bow—that is to say a third—had been found, with its quiver of arrows! Where was the owner? Could he have escaped from the thicket, while the men were engaged around the fallen buffaloes? He might—though it was barely probable—but the hunters knew that these savages run more like wild animals—like hares—than human beings, and he might have escaped to the Chapparal.

"If that Injun has got clar," said Garey, "we've no time to lose in skinnin' them bufflers. Thar's plenty o' his tribe not twenty miles from hyar, I calclate."

"Look down among the willows there!" cried the voice of the chief, "close down to the water!"

There was a pool. It was turbid and trampled around the edges with buffalo tracks. On one side, it was deep. Here willows drooped over, and hung into the water. Several men pressed into this side; and commenced sounding the bottom with their lances, and the butts of their rifles.

Old Rube had come up among the rest; and was drawing the stopper of his powder horn with his teeth, apparently with the intention of reloading. His small dark eyes were scintillating every way at once—above, around him, and in the water.

A sudden thought seemed to enter his head. I saw him push back the plug—grasp the Irishman, who was nearest him, by the arm; and mutter in a low and hurried voice; "Paddy—Barney! gi' us yur gun—quick, man! quick!"

Barney, at this earnest solicitation, immediately surrendered his picce, taking the empty rifle that was thrust into his hand by the trapper.

Rube eagerly grasped the musket; and stood for a moment, as if he was about to fire at some object in the pond. Suddenly he jerked his body round, and, poising the gun upwards, fired into the thick foliage!

A shrill scream followed—a heavy body came slashing through the branches, and struck the ground at my feet. Warm drops sparkled into my eyes, causing me to wince. It was blood! I was blinded with it. I rubbed my eyes to clear them. I heard men rushing from all parts of the thicket. When I could see again, a naked savage was just disappearing through the leaves!

“Missed him by h—l,” cried the trapper. “D—n yur sodger gun,” he added, flinging down the musket; and rushing after with his drawn knife.

I followed among the rest. I heard several shots as we scrambled through the brushwood.

When I had got to the outer edge, I could see the Indian still on his feet, and running with the speed of an antelope. He did not keep a direct line, but zigzag, leaping from side to side, in order to baffle the aim of his pursuers, whose rifles were all the time ringing behind him! As yet none of their bullets had taken effect, at least so as to cripple him. There was a streak of blood visible on his brown body, but the wound, wherever it was, did not seem to hinder him in his flight.

I thought there could be no chance of his escape; and I had no intention of emptying my gun at such a mark. I remained, therefore, among the bushes, screening myself behind the leaves, and watching the chase.

Some of the hunters continued to follow him on foot, while the more cunning ones rushed back for their horses. These happened to be all on the opposite side of the thicket, with one exception, and that was the mare of the trapper Rube. She was browsing—when Rube had dismounted—out among the slaughtered buffaloes, and directly in the line of the chase.

As the savage approached her, a sudden thought seemed to strike him; and diverging slightly from his course, he plucked up the picket-pin—coiled the lasso with the dexterity of a gaucho—and sprang upon the animal’s back!

It was a well-conceived, but unfortunate idea, for the Indian. He had scarcely touched the saddle, when a peculiar shout was heard above all other sounds. It was a call uttered in the voice of the earless trapper. The mustang recognised it, and, instead of running forward obedient to the guidance of her rider, she wheeled suddenly and came galloping back! At this moment, a shot fired at the savage, scored her hip; and, setting back her ears, she commenced squealing and kicking so violently, that all her feet seemed to be in the air at the same time.

The Indian now endeavoured to fling himself from the saddle, but the alternate plunging of the fore and hind quarters, kept him for some moments tossing in a sort of balance. He was at length pitched outward, and fell to the ground upon his back. Before he could recover himself, a Mexican had ridden up, and with his long lance pinned him to the earth!

A scene of swearing followed, in which Rube played the principal character—in fact, had “the stage to himself.” “Sodger guns” were sent to perdition—and as the old trapper was angry about the wound which his mare had received, “crooked-eyed greenhorns” came in for a share of his anathemas. The mustang, however, had sustained no serious damage; and after this was ascertained the emphatic ebullitions of her master’s anger subsided into a low growling, and then ceased altogether.

As there appeared no “sign” that there were other savages in the neighbourhood, the next concern of the hunters was to satisfy their hunger. Fires were soon kindled, and a plenteous repast of buffalo meat produced the desired effect.

After the meal was ended, a consultation was held. It was agreed that we should move forward to the old mission—which was known to be not over ten miles distant. We could there defend ourselves in case of an attack from the tribe of Coyoteros, to which the three savages belonged. It was feared by all that these might strike our trail, and come up with us before we could take our departure from the ruin.

The buffaloes were speedily skinned and packed; and taking a westerly course, we journeyed on to the mission.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A BITTER TAP.

WE reached the ruin a little after sunset. We frighted the owl and the wolf; and made our bivouack among the crumbling walls. Our horses were picketed upon the deserted lawns, and in the long-neglected orchards—where the ripe fruit was raining down its ungathered showers. Fires were kindled, lighting the gray pile with their cheerful blazing; and joints of meat were taken out of the hide-packs, and roasted for supper.

There was water in abundance. A branch of the San Pedro swept past the walls of the mission. There were yams in the spoliated gardens. There were grapes, and pomegranates, and quinces, and melons, and pears, and peaches, and apples; and with all these was our repast garnished.

It was soon over, and videttes were thrown out on the tracks that led to the ruin. The men were weak and weary with their late fasting, and in a short while stretched themselves by their saddles and slept.

So much for our first night at the mission of San Pedro.

We were to remain for three days, or until the Buffalo meat should be dried for packing. * * *

They were irksome days to me. Idleness displayed the bad qualities of my half savage associates. The ribald jest and fearful oath rang continually in my ears, until I was fain to wander off to the woods with the old botanist, who during these three days, revelled in the happy excitement of discovery.

I found companionship also in the Maricopa. This strange man had studied science deeply, and was conversant with almost every noted author. He was reserved only when I wished to talk-of himself.

Seguin during these days was taciturn and lonely. He took but little heed of what was going on around him. He seemed to be suffering from impatience, as every now and then he paid a visit to the *tasajo*. He passed many hours upon the adjacent heights, looking anxiously towards the east—that point whence our spies would come in from the Pinon.

There was an *azotea* on the ruin. I was in the habit of seeking this place at evening, after the sun had grown less fervid. It afforded a fine prospect of the valley; but its chief attraction, to me, lay in the retirement I could there obtain. The hunters rarely climbed up to it, and their wild and licensed converse was unheard for the time. I would spread my blanket among the crumbling parapets, and stretched upon it, deliver myself up to the sweet retrospect, or to still sweeter dreams, that my fancy outlined upon the future. There was but one object on my memory—upon that object only did my hopes dwell.

I need not have made this declaration—at least to those who have truly loved. * * *

I am in my favorite place—on the *azotea*. It is night, yet scarcely seems so. The moon, full-orbed—autumnal—is sweeping up towards the zenith, outlined against a heaven of cloudless blue. In mine own far land, she will be the harvest moon. Here she shines not on the harvest, nor lights the reaper home; but the season, fair in all climes, is not less lovely in this romantic wilderness. I am on the table of the northern Andes, and many thousand feet above the ocean level. The air is thin and dry. I can perceive its extreme tenuity by the greater distinctness of objects—the apparent propinquity of mountains, that I know to be distant; and the sharpness of their outlines against the sky. I can perceive it in the absence of extreme heat, in the buoyancy of my blood, and the lighter play of my lungs. Ah! this is the home for the hectic cheek and the hollow eye. Would that nations would know this!

The air is vaporless, and filled with the milky moonlight. My eye rest upon curious objects—upon forms of vegetation peculiar to the soil. They interest me with their newness. Under the white light, I see the lanceolate leaves of the *yuca*, the tall columns of the *pitahaya*, and the jaggy frondage of the cochineal cactus.

There are sounds upon the air—the noises of the camp—of men and animals—but, thank Heaven! I can only hear their distant hum. There is another voice more pleasing to my ear. It is the song of the mock-bird, the nightingale of the western world. He pours his mimic notes from the top of an adjacent tree. He is filling the air with his dulcet melody.

The moon is over all, and I watch her in her upward course. There is a thought within me, which she seems to rule—love. How often have poets sung of her power over the gentle passion! With them it was only a fancy—a graceful expression; but in all

times, and in all climes, it has been a belief. Whence comes this belief? Has it not been communicated in the whisperings of a God—the same whisperings that tell us of his own existence? May it not be a truth? May not mind in the end prove to be matter—electric fluid? If so, why not influenced by the silent moon? Why not have its tides, as well as the air and the ocean?

It is hard to yield up our college metaphysics—to behold the worshipped men of our wrangling days—Stewart, Brown, Locke, Mill, and him of my own name—become degraded under modern light—to see their elaborate structure, like an inverted pyramid, about to tumble down, because the apex, on which it so long balanced itself, turns out to be a false foundation. It is sad to look upon shelves filled with ponderous tomes, whose very existence only proves that our fathers were our children, as we in our time will become the children of our descendants. It is sad to think that so many profound philosophers will one day receive credit only for hair-splitting ingenuity. So will it be.

I followed this train of thought, as I lay drinking in the milky essence of the moon. I dwelt on the scenes suggested by the ruins around me—the deeds and the misdeeds of cowed padres and their sandaled serfs. Thoughts of these were in my mind, tinging my spirit with the romance of the antique, but they did not long remain objects of reflection. I wandered over them and returned again to think of that fair being so lately loved, and left—Zöe—beautiful Zöe.

Of her I had many thoughts. “Was she thinking of me as well? Was she pained by my absence? Did she watch for my return? Were her eyes bedewed, as she looked from the lonely terrace?”

My heart answered “Yes,” with proud and happy pulsations.

The horrid scenes I was now enduring for her sake—how long until they would be over? Days, many days, I feared. I love adventure; my life has been its sport; but such as this was! I had not yet committed crime; although I had countenanced its committal, by the necessity under which I had placed myself. How long before this necessity might force me into the enacting of deeds, dark as those of the men who surrounded me!

In the programme placed before me by Seguin, I had not bargained for such wanton cruelties as I was now compelled to witness. It was not the time to look back; but forward—and, perhaps, over the scenes of blood and brutality—to that happier hour when I should have redeemed my promise and won the prize—Zöe—beautiful Zöe!

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My reverie was interrupted. I heard voices and footsteps. They were approaching where I lay. I could see there were two men engaged in an earnest conversation. They did not notice me, as I was behind some fragments of the broken parapet, and in the shadow. As they drew nearer, I recognized the patois of my

Canadian follower, and that of his companion was not to be mistaken. The brogue was Barney's beyond a doubt.

These worthies, I had lately noticed, had become as "thick as thieves," and were much in each other's company. Some act of kindness had endeared the "infantry," to his more astute and experienced associate, who had taken him under "his patronage and protection."

I was vexed at the intrusion; but, prompted by some impulse of curiosity, I lay still and listened.

Barney was speaking as they approached.

"In trath, Misther Gowdey, an' it's meself 'ud go far this blissed night for a drap o' the crayter. I noticed the little kig afore; but divil resave me! av I thought it was anything barrin' cowl'd water. Vistment! only think o' the owld Dutch sinnei bringin' a whole kig wid 'im, an' keepin' it all to himself. Yez are sure, now, its the stuff?"

"Oui—oui!—C'est liqueur—*aguardiente*."

"Agwardenty ye say, div ye?"

"Oui! c'est vrai. Monsieur Barney. I have him smell ver many times. It is of stink tre fort—dam strong!—dam good!"

"But why cudn't ye stale it yerself? Yez know exactly where the doctor keeps it; an' ye might get at it a hape handier than I can."

"Pourquois, Barney? because, mon ami, I help pack les possibles of Monsieur le docteur. Par dieu! he would me suspect."

"I don't see the raizon clear. He may suspect ye at all evints. How thin?"

"Ah! then n'importe. I sall make von grand swear, No. I sall have ver clear conscience then."

"Be the powers! we must get the lick'er anyhow; an' av you wor't, Misther Gowdey, I will; that's said, isn't it?"

"Oui! tres bien!"

"Well, thin, now or niver's the time. The owld fellow's just walked out, for I saw him myself. This is a nate place to drink it in. Come an' show me where he keeps it; and by St. Patrick, I'm yer man to hook it."

"Tres bien! allons! Monsieur Barney, allons!"

Unintelligible as this conversation may appear, I understood every word of it. The naturalist had brought among his packs a small keg of *aguardiente*—mezcal spirits—for the purpose of preserving any new species of the lizard or snake tribe he should chance to fall in with. What I heard then was neither more nor less than a plot to steal the keg and its contents.

My first impulse was to leap up and stop them in their design as well as administer a salutary rebuke to my voyageur and his red-haired companion. But a moment's reflection convinced me that they could be better punished in another way. I would leave them to punish themselves.

I remembered that some days previous to our reaching the Oje de Vaca, the doctor had captured a snake of the adder kind, two or three species of lizards, and a hideous-looking animal, called, in hunter phraseology, the horned frog—the *agama cornuta* of Texas and Mexico. These he had immersed into the keg for preservation. I had observed him do so, and it was evident that neither my Frenchman nor the Irishman had any idea of this. I adopted the resolution, therefore, to let them drink a full bumper of the pickle before I should interfere.

Knowing that they would soon return with the keg, I remained where I was.

I had not long to wait upon them. In a few minutes they came up, Barney carrying what I knew to be the devoted keg.

They sat down close to where I lay, and, prying out the bung, filled the liquor into their tin cups and commenced imbibing.

A drouthier pair of mortals could not have been found anywhere, and, at the first draught, each emptied his cup to the bottom!

"It has a quare taste, hasn't it?" said Barney, after he had taken the vessel from his lips.

"Oui! c'est vrai, monsieur!"

"What dev ye think it is?"

"Je ne seais quoi. It smells like one dam—one dam—"

"Is it fish ye mane?"

"Oui! like one dam feesh—un bouquet tre bizarre. Fitchtre!"

"I suppose it's something that the Mexicans have drapped in to give the agwardenty a flayvur. It's mighty strong, anyhow, 't's nothing the worse av that; but it 'ud be sorry drinkin' alongside a nate dimmyjan of Irish patyeen. Och! mother av Moses! but that's the raal bayvaridge!"

Here the Irishman shook his head to express with more emphasis his admiration of the "native" whiskey.

"Well, Mистер Gowdey," continued he, "whiskey's whiskey at any rate; and if we can't get the butther, it's no raison we should refuse the brid; so I'll thank ye for another small thrifle out of the kig," and the speaker held out his tin vessel to be replenished.

Godé lifted the keg; and emptied more of its contents into their cups.

"Mon Dieu! what is dis in my cops?" exclaimed he, after a draught.

"Pwhat is it? Let me see. That! Be me sowl! that's a quare-looking crayter anyhow."

"Sac-r-r-re! it is von dam Texan—von fr-r-og! Dat is de dam feesh we smell stink. Owah—ah—ah!"

"Oh by the howly mother! if here isn't another in moine! Jaysus! it's a scurpion lizard! Hoach—wach—wach—!"

"Ow—ah—ah—ach—ack! Mon Dieu! Oach—ach—. Sac-r

"Oach—ach—o—oa—aa—ch!"

“Tare an ages! Ho—ach—the owld doctor has—oach—ack—ack! Blessed Vargin! Ha—ho—hoh—ack! Poison! Poison!”

And the brace of revellers went staggering over the azotea, delivering their stomachs; and ejaculating in extreme terror, as the thought struck them that there might be poison in the pickle!

I had risen to my feet, and was enjoying the joke in loud laughter. This and the exclamations of the men brought a crowd of hunters up to the roof; who, as soon as they perceived what had happened, joined in and made the ruin ring with their wild peals.

The doctor, who had come up among the rest, was not so well satisfied with the occurrence. After a short search, however, the lizards were found, and returned to the keg; which still contained enough of the spirit for his purposes. It was not likely to be disturbed again, by the thirstiest hunter in the band

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE PHANTOM CITY

ON the morning of the fourth day, our spies came in, and reported that the Navajoes *had taken the southern trail!*

They had returned to the spring, on the second day after our leaving it; and thence, had followed the guiding of the arrows. It was Dacoma's band, in all about three hundred warriors.

Nothing remained for us now, but to pack up as quickly as possible, and pursue our march to the north.

In an hour we were in our saddles, and following the rocky banks of the San Pedro.

A long day's journey brought us to the desolate valley of the Gila, upon whose waters we encamped for the night. We slept near the celebrated ruins—the second resting place of the migrating Aztecs.

With the exception of the botanist, the Coco chief, myself, and perhaps Seguin, no one in the band seemed to trouble himself about these interesting antiquities. The "sign" of grizzly bears, that was discovered upon the mud bottom, gave the hunters far more concern than the broken pottery and its hieroglyphics. Two of these animals were discovered near the camp, and a fierce battle ensued, in which one of the Mexicans nearly lost his life—escaping, only, after most of the skin had been clawed from his head and neck! The bears themselves were killed, and made part of our suppers.

Our next day's march lay upon the Gila, to the mouth of the San Carlos river, where we again halted for the night. The San Carlos runs in from the north; and Seguin had resolved to travel up this stream for a hundred miles or so, and afterwards strike eastward to the country of the Navajoes.

When this determination was made known, a spirit of discontent showed itself among the men; and mutinous whisperings were heard on all sides.

However, shortly after we halted, several of them strayed up the banks of the stream, and gathered some grains of gold out of its bed. The indications of the precious metal—the *quixa*—known among the Mexicans as the “gold mother,” was found among the rocks. There were miners in the band who knew it well—and this served to satisfy them. There was no more talk of keeping on to the Prieto. Perhaps the San Carlos might prove equally rich. Rumor had also given it the title of a “golden river;” at all events, the expedition must cross the head waters of the Prieto in its journey eastward; and this prospect had the effect of quieting the mutineers, at least for the time.

There was another influence—the character of Seguin. There was no single individual in the band, who cared to cross him on slight grounds. They knew him too well for that; and though few of these men set high value on their lives, when they believed themselves, according to “mountain law” in the right—yet, they knew, that to delay the expedition for the purpose of gathering gold, was neither according to their compact with him, nor agreeable to his wishes. Not a few of the band, moreover, were actuated by motives similar to those felt by Seguin himself; and these were equally desirous of pushing on to the Navajo towns.

Still another consideration had its influence upon the majority. The party of Dacoma would be on our track, as soon as they had returned from the Apache trail. We had, therefore, no time to waste in gold seeking; and the simplest of the scalp-hunters knew this.

By daybreak, we were again on the march; and riding up the banks of the San Carlos.

We had now entered the great desert which stretches northward from the Gila, away to the head quarters of the Colorado. We entered it without a guide—for not one of the band had ever traversed these unknown regions. Even Rube knew nothing about this part of the country. We were without compass too, but this we needed not. There were few in the band who could not point to the north, or the south, within the variation of a degree—few of them but could—night or day—tell, by the heavens, within ten minutes of the true time! Give them but a clear sky—with the “signs” of the trees and rocks—and they needed neither compass nor chronometer. A night spent beneath the blue heaven of the prairie-uplands and the mountain “parks”—where a roof rarely obstructed their view of the azure vault—had made astronomers of these reckless rovers!

Of such accomplishments was their education—drawn from many a perilous experience. To me, their knowledge of such things seemed “instinct.”

But we had a guide as to our direction, unerring as the magnetic needle; we were traversing the region of the "polar plant" the planes of whose leaves, at almost every step, pointed out our meridian! It grew upon our track; and was crushed under the hoofs of our horses, as we rode onward.

For several days, we travelled northward through a country of strange looking mountains, whose top shot heavenward in fantastic forms and groupings. At one time we saw shapes semiglobular like the domes of churches. At another, Gothic turrets rose before us; and the next opening brought in view, sharp needle-pointed peaks, shooting upward in the blue sky! We saw columnar forms supporting others that lay horizontally—vast boulders of trap-rock suggesting the idea of some antediluvian ruin—some temple of gigantic Druids!

Along with singularity of formation, was the most brilliant coloring. There were stratified rocks, red, white, green, and yellow—as vivid in their hues as if freshly touched from the palette of the painter!

No smoke had tarnished them since they had been flung up from their subterranean beds. No cloud draped their naked outlines. It was not a land of clouds, for as we journeyed among them, we saw not a speck in the heavens. Nothing above us, but the blue and limitless ether!

I remembered the remarks of Seguin.

There was something inspiriting in the sight of these bright mountains—something like-life—that prevented us from feeling the extreme and real desolation by which we were surrounded. At times, we could not help fancying that we were in a thickly populated country—a country of vast wealth and civilization—as appeared from its architectural grandeur! Yet in reality we were journeying through the wildest of earth's dominions—where no human foot ever trod, excepting such as wear the mocasson—the region of the "wolf Apaché, and the wretched Yamparico!

We travelled up the banks of the river, and, here and there, at our halting places, searched for the shining metal. It could be found only in small quantities; and the hunters began to talk loudly of the Prieto. There, according to them, the yellow gold lay in "lumps."

On the fourth day after leaving the Gila, we came to a place where the San Carlos canoned through a high sierra. Here we halted for the night. When morning came we found we could follow the river no farther, without climbing over the mountain; and Seguin announced his intention of leaving it, and striking eastward. The hunters responded to this declaration with a wild hurrah! The golden vision was again before them.

We remained at the San Carlos until after the noon heat—recruiting our horses by the stream. Then mounting, we rode forward into the plain. It was our intention to travel all night,

or until we reached water—as we knew that without this, halting would be useless.

We had not ridden far, until we saw that a fearful “*Jornada*” was before us—one of those dreaded “*stretches*” without grass, wood, or water. Ahead of us we could see a low range of mountains, trending from north to south; and beyond these, another range still higher than the first. On the farther range there were snowy summits. We saw that they were distinct chains, and that the more distant was of great elevation. This we knew from the appearance upon its peaks of the “*eternal snow*.”

We knew, moreover, that at the foot of the snowy range we should find water—perhaps the river we were in search of—but the distance was immense. If we did not find it at the nearer sierra, we would have an adventure—the danger of perishing from thirst. Such was the prospect!

We rode on over the arid soil—over plains of lava, and cut-rock, that wounded the hoofs of our horses, laming many. There was no vegetation around us, except the sickly green of the *artemisia*, or the fetid foliage of the creosote plant. There was no living thing to be seen—save the brown and hideous lizard, the rattle-snake, the desert crickets that crawled in myriads along the parched ground, and were crunched under the hoofs of our animals! “*Water!*” was the word that began to be uttered in many a language.

“*Water,*” cried the choking trapper.

“*L'eau!*” ejaculated the Canadian.

“*Agua! agua!*” shouted the Mexican.

We were not twenty miles from the San Carlos, before our gourd canteens were as dry as a shingle! The dust of the plains and the hot atmosphere, had created unusual thirst; and we had soon emptied them.

We had started late in the afternoon. At sundown the mountains ahead of us did not seem a single mile nearer! We travelled all night, and when the sun rose again, we were still a good distance from them! Such is the illusive character of this elevated and crystal atmosphere.

The men mumbled as they talked. They held in their mouths leaden bullets, and pebbles of obsidian—which they chewed with a desperate fierceness.

It was some time after sunrise, when we arrived at the mountain foot. To our consternation, no water could be found!

The mountains were a range of dry rocks—so parched-like and barren, that even the creosote bush could not find nourishment along their sides. They were as naked of vegetation as when the volcanic fires first heaved them into the light!

Parties scattered in all directions, and went up the ravines; but after a long while spent in fruitless wandering, we abandoned the search in despair.

There was a pass that appeared to lead through the range; and entering this, we rode forward in silence and with gloomy

We soon debouched on the other side, when a scene of singular character burst upon our view.

A plain lay before us, hemmed in on all sides by high mountains. On its farther edge was the snowy ridge, whose stupendous cliffs rose vertically from the plain, towering thousands of feet in height. Dark rocks seemed piled upon each other, higher and higher until they became buried under robes of the spotless snow!

But that which appeared most singular was the surface of the plain. It was covered with a mantle of virgin whiteness—apparently of snow—and yet the more elevated spot from which we viewed it was naked, with a hot sun shining upon it! What we saw in the valley then could not be snow.

As I gazed over the monotonous surface of this plain, and then looked upon the chaotic mountains that walled it in, my mind became impressed with ideas of coldness and desolation. It seemed as if every thing was dead around us, and nature was laid out in her winding sheet! I saw that my companions experienced similar feelings—but no one spoke; and we commenced riding down the pass that led into this singular valley.

As far as we could see, there was no prospect of water on the plain; but what else could we do than cross it? On its most distant border, along the base of the snowy mountains, we thought we could distinguish a black line—like that of timber—and for this point we directed our march.

On reaching the plain, what had appeared like snow, proved to be soda! A deep incrustation of this lay upon the ground—enough to satisfy the wants of the whole human race—yet there it lay, and no hand had ever stooped to gather it!

Three or four rocky buttes were in our way, near the debouchure of the pass. As we rounded them, getting farther out into the plain, a wide gap began to unfold itself, opening through the mountains. Through this gap the sun's rays were streaming in—throwing a band of yellow light across one end of the valley. In this the crystals of the soda, stirred up by the breeze appeared floating in myriads.

As we descended, I observed that objects began to assume a very different aspect from what they had exhibited from above. As if by enchantment, the cold snowy surface all at once disappeared. Green fields lay before us, and tall trees sprang up covered with a thick and verdant frondage!

“Cottonwoods!” cried a hunter, as his eye rested on these still distant groves.

“Tall saplins at that—Wagh!” ejaculated another.

“Water thar, fellers, I reckon,” remarked a third.

“Yes sirree! yer don't see such sprouts as them growing out o' a dry peraira. Look! hilloa!”

“By Gollies, yonder’s a house!”

“A house? one—two—three—a house? thar’s a whole town, if thar’s a single shanty. Gee! Jim, look yonder. Wagh!”

I was riding in front with Seguin; the rest of the band strung out behind us. I had been for some time gazing upon the ground, in a sort of abstraction, looking at the snow-white efflorescence, and listening to the crunching of my horse’s hoofs through its icy incrustation. These exclamatory phrases caused me to raise my eyes. The sight that met them was one that made me rein up with a sudden jerk. Seguin had done the same, and I saw that the whole band had halted with a similar impulse!

We had just cleared one of the buttes, that had hitherto obstructed our view of the great gap. This was now directly in front of us; and along its base, on the southern side, rose the walls and battlements of a city—a vast city judging from its distance, and the colossal appearance of its architecture! We could trace the columns of temples, and doors, and gates, and windows, and balconies, and parapets, and spires! There were many towers rising high over the roofs; and in the middle was a temple-like structure, with its massive dome towering far above all the others!

I looked upon this sudden apparition with a feeling of incredulity. It was a dream, an imagination, a *mirage*! Ha! it was a *mirage*.

But no! The *mirage* could not effect such a complete picture. There were the roofs, and chimneys, and walls, and windows! There were the parapets of fortified houses, with their regular notches and embrasures! It was a reality. It was a city!

Was it the Cibolo of the Spanish Padre? Was it that city of golden gates, and burnished towers? Was the story of the wandering priest after all true? Who had proved it a fable? Who had ever penetrated this region, the very country in which the ecclesiastic represented the golden city of Cibolo to exist?

I saw that Seguin was puzzled, dismayed, as well as myself! He knew nothing of this land. He had never witnessed a *mirage* like that!

For some time we sat in our saddles, influenced by strange emotions. Shall we go forward? Yes! We must reach water. We are dying of thirst; and, impelled by this we spur onward.

We had ridden only a few paces farther, when the hunters uttered a sudden and simultaneous cry! A new object—an object of terror—was before us! Along the mountain foot appeared a string of dark forms. *They were mounted men!*

We dragged our horses to their haunches, our whole line halting as one man!

“Injuns!” was the exclamation of several.

“Indians they must be,” muttered Seguin. “There are no other here—Indians! No! There never were such as them.

See! they are not men! Look! their huge horses; their long guns; *they are giants!* By heaven!" continued he, after a moment's pause, "they are bodiless! *They are phantoms!*"

There were exclamations of terror from the hunters behind.

Were these the inhabitants of the city? There was a striking proportion in the colossal size of the horses and the horsemen!

For a moment I was awe-struck like the rest. Only a moment. A sudden memory flashed upon me. I thought of the Martz mountains, and their demons. I knew that the phenomena before us could be no other—an optical delusion—a creation of the *mirage*.

I raised my hand above my head. The foremost of the giants imitated the motion!

I put spurs to my horse, and galloped forward. So did he, as if to meet me! After a few springs, I had passed the refracting angle; and, like a thought, the shadowy giant vanished into air!

The men had ridden forward after me; and having also passed the angle of refraction, saw no more of the phantom host.

The city, too had disappeared; but we could trace the outlines of many a singular formation in the trap-rock strata that traversed the edge of the valley.

The tall groves were no longer to be seen; but a low belt of green willows—real willows—could be distinguished along the foot of the mountain within the gap! Under their foliage there was something that sparkled in the sun like sheets of silver. *It was water!* It was a branch of the Prieto!

Our horses neighed at the sight; and shortly after we had alighted upon its banks, and were kneeling before the sweet spirit of the stream!

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE MOUNTAIN OF GOLD.

AFTER so fatiguing a march it was necessary to make a longer halt than usual. We stayed by the arroyo all that day and the following night. But the hunters longed to drink from the Prieto itself; and next morning we drew our pickets, and rode in the direction of that river. By noon we were upon its banks.

A singular river it was—running through a region of bleak, barren, and desolate mountains. Through these the stream had forged its way by numerous canons, and rushed along a channel at most places inaccessible. It was a black and gloomy river. Where were its sands of gold?

After riding for some distance along its banks, we halted at a point where its bed could be reached. The hunters, disregarding all else, clambered eagerly over the steep bluffs, and descended to the water. They hardly stayed to drink. They crawled through narrow interstices, between detached masses of rock that had fallen from above. They lifted the mud in their hands, and washed it in their cups—they hammered the quartz-rock with their tomahawks, and pounded it between great stones. Not a particle of the precious metal could be found! They must either have struck the river too high up; or else the El Dorado lay still further to the north.

Wet, weary, angry, muttering oaths and expressions of disappointment, they obeyed the signal to "march forward."

We rode up the stream, halting for the night at another place where the water was accessible to our animals.

Here the hunters again searched for gold, and again found it not. Mutinous murmurs were now spoken aloud. The gold

country lay below them—they had no doubt of it. The chief took them by the San Carlos on purpose to disappoint them. He knew this would prevent delay. He cared not for them. His own ends were all he wanted to accomplish. They might go back as poor as they had come, for aught he cared. They would never have so good a chance again.

Such were the mutterings embellished with many an oath.

Seguin either heard not, or did not heed them. He was one of those characters, who can patiently bear until a proper cue for action may offer itself. He was fiery by nature—like all Creoles—but time and trials had tempered him to that calmness and coolness that befitted the leader of such a band. When roused to action, he became, what is styled in western phraseology a “dangerous man;” and the scalp-hunters knew it. He heeded not their murmurings.

Long before daybreak, we were once more in our saddles, and moving onward, still up the Prieto. We had observed fires at a distance during the night, and we knew that they were at the villages of the “Club” Apaché. We wished to pass their country without being seen; and it was our intention, when daylight appeared, to caché among the rocks until the following night.

As dawn advanced, we halted in a concealed ravine, whilst several of us climbed the hill to reconnoitre. We could see the smoke rising over the distant villages; but we had passed them in the darkness; and instead of remaining in caché we continued on through a wide plain covered with sage and cactus plants. Mountains towered up on every side of us as we advanced. They rose directly from the plains, exhibiting the fantastic shapes which characterise them in these regions. Their stupendous precipices overlooked the bleak barren tables frowning upon them in sublime silence. The plains themselves ran into the very bases of these cliffs. Water had surely washed them! These plateaus had once been the bed of an ancient ocean. I remembered Seguin’s theory of the inland seas.

Shortly after sunrise, the trail we were following led us to an Indian crossing. Here we forded the stream with the intention of leaving it, and heading eastward.

We halted our horses in the water, permitting them to drink freely. Some of the hunters, moving a-head of the rest, had climbed the high banks. We were attracted by their unusual exclamations. On looking upward, we perceived several of them standing on the top of a hill, and pointing to the north in an earnest and excited manner! Could it be Indians?

“What is it?” shouted Seguin, as we pushed forward.

“A gold mountain! a gold mountain!” was the reply.

We spurred our horses hurriedly up the hill. On reaching its top, a strange sight met our gaze. Away to the north, and as far as the eye could see, an object glistened in the sun. It was a mountain, and along its sides, from base to summit, the rocks

glittered with the bright semblance of gold! A thousand jets danced in the sunbeam, dazzling the eye as it looked upon them. Was it a mountain of gold?

The men were in a frenzy of delight. This was the mountain so often discussed over the bivouack fires. Who of them had not heard of it—whether credulous or not? It was no fable then. There it was, before them in all its burning splendor!

I turned to look at Seguin. His brow was bent. There was the expression of anxiety in his countenance. He understood the illusion. So did the Maricopa. So did Reichter. I knew it too. At a glance I had recognised the sparkling scales of the selenite!

Seguin saw that there was a difficulty before us. This dazzling hallucination lay far out of our course; but it was evident that neither commands nor persuasion would be heeded now. The men were resolved upon reaching it. Some of them had already turned their horses' heads and were moving in that direction.

Seguin ordered them back. A stormy altercation then ensued—in short, a mutiny.

In vain Seguin urged the necessity of our hastening forward to the town. In vain he represented the danger we were in of being overtaken by Dacoma's party—who by this were upon our trail. In vain the Coco chief, the doctor, and myself, assured our uneducated companions that what they saw was but the glancing surface of a worthless rock. The men were obstinate. The sight, operating upon long cherished hopes, had intoxicated them. They had lost all reason. They were mad!

"On then!" cried Seguin, making a desperate effort to restrain his passion. "On, madmen, and satisfy yourselves! Our lives may answer for your folly!" and, so saying, he turned his horse, and headed him for the shining beacon.

The men rode after, uttering loud and joyful acclamations.

At the end of a long day's ride we reached the base of the mountain. The hunters leaped from their horses, and clambered up to the glittering rocks. They reached them. They broke them with their tomahawks and pistol-butts, and cleft them with their knives. They tore off the plates of mica and glassy selenite. They flung them at their feet abashed and mortified; and, one after another, came back to the plain with looks of disappointment and chagrin! Not one of them said a word, as they climbed into their saddles, and rode sullenly after the chief.

We had lost a day by this aimless journey; but our consolation lay in the belief, that our Indian pursuers following upon our trail would make the same detour.

Our course now lay to the south-west; but finding a spring not far from the foot of the mountain, we remained by it for the night.

Another day's march in a south easterly course, Rube recognised the profiles of the mountains. We were nearing the great town of the Navajoes!

That night we encamped on a running water—a branch of the Prieto that headed to the eastward. A vast chasm between two cliffs marked the course of the stream above us. The guide pointed into the gap, as we rode forward to our halting-place.

“What is it Rube?” inquired Seguin.

“’Ee see that gully a-head o’ us?”

“Yes—what of it?”

“The town’s thur.”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

NAVAJOA.

It was near evening of the next day, when we arrived at the foot of the sierra, at the debouchure of the Canon.

We could not follow the stream any farther, as there was no path by the channel. It would be necessary to pass over the ridge that formed the southern jaw of the chasm. There was a plain trail among scrubby pines; and, following our guide, we commenced riding up the mountain.

After ascending for an hour or so by a fearful road along the very brink of the precipice, we climbed the crest of the ridge, and looked eastward. We had reached the goal of our journey. The town of the Navajoes was before us!

"*Voila!*" "*Mira el pueblo!*" "Thar's the town!" "Hurrah!" were the exclamations that broke from the hunters.

"O God! at last it is," muttered Seguin, with a singular expression of countenance. "O God be praised! Halt, comrades! Halt!"

Our reins were tightened; and we sat on our weary horses, looking over the plain. A magnificent panorama—magnificent under any circumstances—lay below us; but its interest was heightened by the peculiar circumstances, under which we viewed it.

We are at the western extremity of an oblong valley looking up it lengthwise. It is not a valley—though so called in the language of Spanish America—but a plain walled in, on all sides, by mountains. It is elliptical in form—the diameter of its foci being ten or twelve miles in length. Its shortest diameter is five or six. It has the surface of a green meadow, and its per-

fect level is unbroken by brake, bush, or hillock. It looks like some quiet lake transformed into an emerald!

It is bisected by a line of silvery brightness that curves gracefully through its whole extent, marking the windings of a crystal stream.

But the mountains! What wild-looking mountains—particularly those on the north side of the valley! They are granite upheaved. Nature must have warred at the birth of these. The very sight of them suggests the throes of a troubled planet. Huge rocks hang over, only half resting upon fearful precipices—vast boulders that seem as though the touch of a feather would cause them to topple down! Grim chasms open into deep dark defiles, and lie silent and solemn and frowning! Here and there, stunted trees—the cedar and pinon—hang horizontally out—clinging along the cliffs. The unsightly limbs of the cactus, and the gloomy foliage of the creosote bush grow together in seams of the rock, heightening their character of ruggedness and gloom. Such is the southern barrier of the valley.

Look upon the northern sierra. Here is a contrast—a new geology. Not a rock of granite meets the eye; but there are others piled as high, and glistening with the whiteness of snow! These are mountains of the milky quartz. They exhibit a variety of peaks—naked and shining—crags that hang over deep treeless ravines, and needle-shaped summits, aspiring to the sky. They too have their vegetation—a vegetation that suggests ideas of the desert and desolation.

The two sierras appear to converge at the eastern end of the valley. We are upon a transverse ridge that shuts it in upon the west; and from this point we view the picture.

Where the valley ends eastwardly, we perceive a dark back ground lying up against the mountains. We know it is a pine forest; but we are at too great a distance to distinguish the trees. Out of this forest the stream appears to issue; and upon its banks, near the border of the woods, we perceive a collection of strange pyramidal structures. They are houses. It is the town of Navajoa!

Our eyes were directed upon it with eager gaze. We could trace the outlines of the houses—though they stood nearly ten miles distant. They suggested images of a strange architecture. There were some standing apart from the rest, with terraced roofs, and we could see there were banners waving over them! One larger than the rest, presented the appearance of a temple. It was out on the open plain, and by the glass we could detect numerous forms clustered upon its top—the forms of human beings. There were others upon the roofs and parapets of the smaller houses; and many more moving upon the plain nearer to us, driving before them flocks of animals—mules and mustangs. Some were down upon the banks of the river; and others, we could see, plunging about in the water.

Several droves of horses—whose mottled flanks showed their descent—were quietly browsing in the open prairie. Flocks of wild swans, geese, and gruyas winged their way up and down the meandering current of the stream.

The sun was setting. The mountains were tinged with an amber-colored light; and the quartzose crystals sparkled on the peaks of the southern sierra.

It was a scene of silent beauty. How long, thought I, ere its silence be broken by the sounds of ravage and ruin!

We remained for some time gazing up the valley, without any one uttering his thoughts. It was the silence that precedes resolve. In the minds of my companions there were varied emotions at play—varied in kind, as they differed in intensity—differing as widely as heaven from hell!

Some were holy. Men sat straining their eyes over the long reach of meadow, thinking—or fancying, that in the distance they might distinguish a loved object—a wife—a sister—a daughter—or perhaps the object of a still dearer and deeper affection. No—that could not be. None could have been more deeply affected than he who was seeking for his child. A father's love was the strongest passion there.

Alas! there were other emotions in the bosoms of those around me—passions dark and sinful. Fierce looks were bent upon the town. Some of these betokened feelings of revenge; others indicated the desire of plunder; and still others spoke, fiend-like, of *murder!* There had been mutterings of this, from day to day, as we journeyed. Men—disappointed in their golden dreams—had been heard to talk about the *price of scalps!*

By a command from Seguin the hunters drew back among the trees; and entered into a hurried council. How was the town to be taken? We could not approach it in the open light. The inhabitants would see us, before we could ride up; and make their escape to the forest beyond. This would defeat the whole purpose of our expedition.

Could a party not get round to the eastern end of the valley, and prevent this? Not through the plain itself, for the mountains rested upon its surface, without either foot hills or paths along their sides. In some places vast cliffs rose to the height of a thousand feet, stepping directly upon the level plain. This idea was given up.

Could we not turn the southern sierra, and come in through the forest itself? This would bring us close to the houses under cover. The guide was questioned; and answered in the affirmative. But that could only be accomplished by making a detour of nearly fifty miles. We had no time for such a journey; and the thought was abandoned.

The town then must be approached in the night. This was the only plan practicable, at least the most likely to succeed. It was adopted.

It was not Seguin's intention to make a night attack ; but only to surround the buildings, keeping at some distance out, and remain in ambush till the morning. All retreat would thus be cut off ; and we should make sure of taking our captives under the light of day.

The men threw themselves to the ground ; and, holding their bridles, waited the going down of the sun.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE NIGHT AMBUSCADE.

A SHORT hour passes. The bright orb sinks behind us ; and the quartz rock saddens into a sombre hue. The straggling rays of twilight hover but a moment over the chalky cliffs, and then vanish away. It is night.

Descending the hills in a long string, we arrive upon the plain. We turn to the left and keep round the mountain foot. The rocks guide us.

We proceed with caution, and exchange our words only in whispers. We crawl around and among loose boulders, that have fallen from above. We turn many spurs, that shoot out into the plain. Occasionally, we halt, and hold council.

After a journey of ten or twelve miles, we find ourselves opposite the Indian town. We are not over a mile from it. We can see the fires burning on the plain ; and hear the voices of those who move around them.

At this point, the band is divided. A small party remains, making its caché in a defile among the rocks. These guard the captive chief and the atajo of mules. The rest move forward, guided by Rube, who carries them around the edge of the forest, here and there dropping a picket of several men as he proceeds.

These parties conceal themselves at their respective stations ; remain silent ; and wait for the signal from the bugle ; which is to be given about the hour of daybreak.

The night passes slowly and silently. The fires, one by one, go out, until the plain is wrapped in the gloom of a moonless midnight. Dark clouds travel over the sky, portending rain, a rare

phenomenon in these regions. The swan utters its wild note ; the gruya whoops over the stream ; and the wolf howls upon the skirts of the sleeping village. The voice of the bull-bat wails through the air. You hear the "flap-flap" of his long wings as he dashes down among the cocuyos. You hear the hoof-stroke on the hard plain ; the "crop" of the browsing steed, and the tinkling of the bit-ring—for the horses eat bridled. At intervals, a drowsy hunter mutters through his sleep—battling, in dreams, with some terrible foe. Thus goes the night. These are its voices.

They cease as daybreak approaches. The wolf howls no longer. The swan and the blue crane are silent. The night-hawk has filled his ravenous maw, and perches on the mountain pine. The fire-flies go out, chased by the colder hours ; and the horses, having eaten what grew within their reach, stand, in lounging attitudes, asleep.

A grey light begins to steal into the valley. It flickers along the white cliffs of the quartz mountain. It brings with it a raw cold air, that wakes the hunters.

One by one they arouse themselves. They shiver as they stand up ; and carry their blankets wrapped about their shoulders. They feel weary, and look pale and haggard. The grey dawn lends a ghastly hue to their dusty beards and unwashed faces.

After a short while they coil up their trail ropes, and fasten them to the rings. They look to their flints and priming ; and tighten the buckles of their belts. They draw forth from their haversacks pieces of dry *tasajo*—eating it raw. They stand by their horses, ready to mount. It is not yet time.

The light is gathering into the valley. The blue mist, that hung over the river during the night, is rising upward. We can see the town. We can trace the odd outlines of the houses. What strange structures they are !

Some of them are higher than others, one, two, four stories in height ! They are in form like a pyramid without its apex. Each upper story is smaller than that below it ; the roofs of the lower ones serving as terraces for those above. They are of a whitish yellow, the color of the clay with which they are built. They are without windows, but doors lead into each story from the outside ; and ladders stretch from terrace to terrace, leaning against the walls. On the tops of some there are poles carrying bannerets. These are the residences of the principal war-chiefs and great warriors of the nation.

We can see the temple distinctly. It is like the houses in shape, but higher and of larger dimensions. There is a tall shaft rising out of its roof, and a banner with a strange device floating at its peak !

Near the houses we see *corrals* filled with mules and mustangs—the live stock of the village.

The light grows stronger. Forms appear upon the roofs, and move along the terraces. They are human forms enveloped in

hanging garments, robe-like and striped. We recognise the Navajo blanket, with its alternate bands of black and white.

With the glass we can see these forms more distinctly; we can tell their sex.

Their hair hangs loosely upon their shoulders, and far down their backs. Most of them are females—girls and women. There are many children, too. There are men white-haired and old. A few other men appear, but they are not warriors. The warriors are absent.

They come down the ladders, descending from terrace to terrace. They go out upon the plain, and rekindle the fires. Some carry earthen vessels—ollas—upon their heads, and pass down to the river. They go in for water. These are nearly naked. We can see their brown bodies, and uncovered breasts. They are slaves.

See! the old men are climbing to the top of the temple. They are followed by women and children—some in white, others in bright colored costumes. These are girls and young lads, the children of the chiefs.

Over an hundred have climbed up. They have reached the highest roof. There is an altar near the staff. A smoke rolls up—a blaze—they have kindled a fire upon the altar!

Listen! the chaunt of voices, and the beat of an Indian drum!

The sounds cease; and they all stand motionless and apparently silent, facing the east.

“What does it mean?”

“They are waiting for the sun to appear. These people worship him.”

The hunters, interested and curious, strain their eyes, watching the ceremony.

The topmost pinnacle of the quartz mountain is on fire! It is the first flash of the sun!

The peak is yellowing downward. Other points catch the brilliant beams. They have struck the faces of the devotees. See! there are white faces! One—two—many white faces both of women and girls!

“O God! grant that it may be!” cried Seguin, hurriedly putting up the glass, and raising the bugle to his lips.

A few wild notes peal over the valley. The horsemen hear the signal. They debouch from the woods, and the defiles of the mountains. They gallop over the plain—deploying as they go.

In a few minutes we have formed the arc of a circle—concave to the town. Our horses' heads are turned inward, and we ride forward, closing upon the walls.

We have left the atajo in the defile—the captive chief too, guarded by a few men.

The notes of the bugle have summoned the attention of the inhabitants. They stand for awhile in amaze, and without motion. They behold the deployment of the line. They see the horsemen ride inward!

Could it be a mock surprise of some friendly tribe? No. That strange voice—the bugle—is new to Indian ears; yet some of them have heard it before. They know it to be the war trumpet of the pale faces!

For awhile their consternation hinders them from action. They stand looking on until we are near. Then they behold pale faces—strange armor—and horses oddly caparisoned. It is the white enemy!

They run from point to point—from street to street! Those who carry water, dash down their ollas; and rush screaming to the houses. They climb to the roofs, drawing the ladders after them. Shouts are exchanged and exclamations uttered in the voices of men, women, and children. Terror is on every face. Terror displays itself in every movement!

Meanwhile our line has approached, until we are within two hundred yards of the walls. There we halt for a moment. Twenty men are left as an outer guard. The rest of us, thrown into a body, ride forward, following our leader.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ADELE.

We direct ourselves to the great building ; and, surrounding it, halt. The old men are still upon the roof, standing along the parapet. They are frightened, and tremble like children.

“Do not fear us—we are friends !” cried Seguin, speaking in a strange language, and making signs to them.

His voice is not heard amidst the shrieks and shouting that still continue.

The words are repeated ; and the sign given in a more emphatic manner.

The old men crowd along the edge of the parapet. There is one among them who differs from the rest. His snow-white hair reaches below his waist. There are bright ornaments hanging from his ears, and over his breast. He is attired in white robes. He appears to be a chief, for the rest obey him. He makes a signal with his hands, and the screaming subsides. He stands forward on the parapet, as if to speak to us.

“Amigos—amigos !” (friends !) cries he, speaking in Spanish !

“Yes—yes—we are friends,” replied Seguin, in the same language. “Do not fear us ! We come not to harm you !”

“Why harm us ? We are at peace with the white Pueblos to the east. We are the children of Moctezuma—we are Navajoes. What want you with us ?”

“We come for our relatives—your white captives. They are our wives and daughters.”

“White captives ! You mistake us. We have no captives. Those you seek are among the nations of the Apaché, away far to the south.”

"No; they are with you," replied Seguin. "I have certain information that they are here. Delay us not then! We have come a far journey for them; and will not go without them."

The old man turns to his companions. They converse in a low voice, and exchange signs. Again he faces round to Seguin.

"Believe me, *senor chief*," says he, speaking with emphasis, "you have been wrongly informed. We have no white captives."

"Pish! 'Ee dod-rotted old liar!" cries Rube, pushing out of the crowd, and raising his catskin cap, as he speaks; "'Ee know this child, do 'ee?"

The skinless head is discovered to the gaze of the Indians. A murmur, indicative of alarm, is heard among them. The white haired chief seems disconcerted. He knows the history of that scalp!

A murmur, too, runs through the ranks of the hunters. They had seen white faces as they rode up. The lie exasperates them; and the ominous click of rifles being cocked is heard on all sides.

"You have spoken falsely, old man," cries Seguin. "We know you have white captives. Bring them forth then, if you would save your own lives."

"Quick, d—n ye!" shouts Garey, raising his rifle in a threatening manner; "quick! or I'll dye the flax on yer old skull!"

"Patience, *amigo*! you shall see our white people—but they are not captives. They are our daughters; the children of Moctezuma."

The Indian descends to the third story of the temple. He enters a door, and presently returns, bringing with him five females dressed in the Navajo costume. They are women and girls; and, as any one can tell at a glance, of the Spano-Mexican race!

But there are those present who know them still better. Three of them are recognized by as many hunters; and recognise them in turn. The girls rush out to the parapet, stretch forth their arms, and utter exclamations of joy. The hunters call to them.

"Pepé!" "Rafacla!" "Jesuita!" coupling their names with expressions of endearment. They shout to them to come down, pointing to the ladders.

"Bajan, *ninas*! *bajan*! *aprisa*! *aprisa*!" (come down, dear girls! quickly, quickly!)

The ladders rest upon the upper terraces. The girls cannot move them. Their late masters stand beside them, frowning and silent.

"Lay holt thar!" cries Garey, again threatening with his piece; "lay holt, d—n ye; and help the gals down, or I'll fetch some o'ye a tumblin over!"

"Lay holt! lay holt!" shout several others in a breath.

The Indians place the ladders. The girls descend; and the next moment leap into the arms of their friends.

Two of them remain above. Only three have come down. Seguin has dismounted, and passes these with a glance. None of them is the object of *his* solicitude!

He rushes up the ladder, followed by several of the men. He springs from terrace to terrace, up to the third. He presses forward to the spot—where stand the two girls. His looks are wild, and his manner that of one frantic. They shrink back at his approach, mistaking his intentions. They scream with terror!

He pierces them with his look. The instincts of the father are busy—they are baffled. One of the females is old—too old. The other is slave-like and coarse!

“*Mon dieu!* it cannot be!” he exclaims with a sigh; “there was a mark, but no—no—no—it cannot be!”

He leans forward seizing the girl, though not unkindly, by the wrist. Her sleeve is torn open, and the arm laid bare to the shoulder.

“No, no!” he again exclaims, “it is not there. It is not she.”

He turns from them. He rushes forward to the old Indian, who falls back frightened at the glare of his fiery eye!

“These are not all,” cries he, in a voice of thunder; “there are others! Bring them forth, old man, or I will hurl you to the earth!”

“There are no other white squaws,” replies the Indian, with a sullen and determined air.

“A lie—a lie! your life will answer—here! confront him, Rube!”

“’Ee dratted old skunk! that white har o’ yourn aint a gwine to stay thur much longer ev you don’t bring her out. Whur is she? the young queen?”

“*Al Sur,*” and the Indian pointed to the south.

“*Oh! Mon dieu! mon dieu!*” cries Seguin, in his native tongue, and with an accentuation that expresses his complete wretchedness.

“Don’t believe him, Cap.! I’ve seed a heap o’ Injun in my time; and a lyiner old varmint than thisin I never seed yet. Ye heer’d him just now ’bout the other gals?”

“Yes true—he lied directly—but she—she might have gone—”

“Not a bit o’ it. Lyin’s his trade. He’s thur great medicine, and humbergs the hul kit o’ them. The gal is what they call mystery queen. She knows a heap; and helps old whitey hyur in his tricks, and sacrifices. He don’t want to lose her. She’s hyur somewhur, I’ll be boun’; but she are cachéd—that’s sartin.”

“Men!” cries Seguin, rushing forward to the parapet, “take ladders! Search every house! Bring all forth, old and young. Bring them to the open plain. Leave not a corner unsearched. Bring me my child!”

The hunters rush for the ladders. They seize those of the great building; and soon possess themselves of others. They run from house to house, and drag out the screaming inmates.

There are Indian men in some of the houses. Lagging braves, boys, and “dandies.” Some of these resist. They are slaughtered, scalped, and flung over the parapets!

Crowds arrive, guarded, in front of the temple—girls and women of all ages.

Seguin's eye is busy. His heart is yearning. At the arrival of each new group, he scans their faces. In vain. Many of them are young and pretty, but brown as the fallen leaf. *She* is not yet brought up.

I see the three captive Mexicans standing with their friends. They should know where she may be found.

"Question *them*," I whisper to the chief.

"Ha! you are right. I did not think of that. Come, come!"

We run together down the ladders; and approach the delivered captives. Seguin hurriedly describes the object of his search.

"It must be the Mystery Queen," says one.

"Yes! yes!" cries Seguin in trembling anxiety, "it is—she is the Mystery Queen."

"She is here then," adds another.

"Where? where?" ejaculates the half frantic father.

"Where? where?" echo the girls, questioning one another.

"I saw her this morning—a short time ago—just before you came up."

"I saw *him* hurry her off," adds a second, pointing upward to the old Indian. "He has hidden her."

"Caval!" cries another, "perhaps in the *estufa*?"

"The *estufa*! what is it?"

"Where the sacred fire burns; where the old man makes his medicine."

"Where is it? lead me to it?"

"*Ay de mi!* we know not the way. It is a secret place, where they burn people! *ay de mi!*"

"But *Senor*, it is in this temple; somewhere under the ground."

"*He* knows. None but he is permitted to enter it. *Carrai!* The *estufa* is a fearful place! So say the people."

An indefinite idea that his daughter may be in danger crosses the mind of Seguin. Perhaps, she is dead already, or dying by some horrid means. He is struck, so are we, with the expression of sullen malice that displays itself upon the countenance of the medicine chief. It is altogether an Indian expression: that of dogged determination to die, rather than yield what he has made up his mind to keep. It is a look of demoniac cunning, characteristic of men of his peculiar calling among the tribes.

Haunted by this thought, Seguin runs to the ladders, and again springs upward to the roof, followed by several of the band. He rushes upon the lying priest, clutching him by the long hair.

"Lead me to her!" he cries, in a voice of thunder; "lead me to this queen—this mystery queen!—*She is my daughter.*"

"Your daughter! the Mystery Queen!" replies the Indian, trembling with fear for his life, yet still resisting the appeal.

"No, white man; she is not. The queen is ours. She is the daughter of the Sun. She is the child of a Navajo chief."

"Tempt me no longer, old man! No longer I say. Look forth! If a hair of her head has been harmed, all these shall suffer. I will not leave a living thing in your town. Lead on! Bring me to the estufa!"

"To the estufa! to the estufa!" shout several voices.

Strong hands grasp the garments of the Indian, and are twined into his loose hair. Knives, already red and reeking, are brandished before his eyes. He is forced from the roof and hurried down the ladders.

He ceases to resist; for he sees that resistance is death; and, half dragged, half leading, he conducts to the ground floor of the building.

He enters by a passage covered with the shaggy hides of the buffalo. Seguin follows, keeping his eye and hand upon him. We crowd after close upon the heels of both.

We pass through dark ways, descending, as we go, through an intricate labyrinth. We arrive in a large room dimly lighted. Ghastly images are before us, and around us, the mystic symbols of a horrid religion! The walls are hung with hideous shapes; and skins of wild beasts. We can see the fierce visages of the grizzly bear, the white buffalo, of the carcajou, of the panther, and the ravenous wolf. We can recognize the horns and frontlets of the elk, the cimmarron, and the grim bison. Here and there are idol figures, of grotesque and monster forms, carved from wood, and the red claystone of the Desert.

A lamp is flickering with a feeble glare; and on a *brazero*, near the centre of the room, burns a small bluish flame. It is the *sacred fire*—the fire that for centuries has blazed to the God Quetzalcoatl!

We do not stay to examine these objects. The fumes of the charcoal almost suffocate us. We run in every direction, overturning the idols, and dragging down the sacred skins.

There are huge serpents gliding over the floor, and hissing around our feet. They have been disturbed, and frightened at the unwonted intrusion. We too are frightened—for we hear the dreaded rattle of the *vivora*!

The men leap from the ground, and strike at them with the butts of their rifles. They crush many of them on the stone pavement.

There are shouts and confusion. We suffer from the exhalations of the charcoal. We will be stifled. Where is Seguin? Where has he gone?

Hark! There are screams! It is a female voice! There are voices of men too!

We rush towards the spot where they are heard. We dash aside the walls of pendant skins. We see the chief. He has a female in his arms—a girl—a beautiful girl—robed in gold and bright plumes!

She is screaming as we enter, and struggling to escape him. He holds her firmly, and has torn open the fawn skin sleeve of her tunic. He is gazing on her left arm, which is bared to the bosom!

"It is she—it is she!" he cries in a voice trembling with emotion; "O God! it is she! Adele! Adele! do you not know me? Me—your father?"

Her screams continue. She pushes him off, stretching out her arms to the Indian, and calling upon *him* to protect her!

The father entreats her in wild and pathetic words. She heeds him not. She turns her face from him, and crouches down—hugging the knees of the priest!

"She knows me not! O God! my child! my child!"

Again Seguin speaks in the Indian tongue, and with imploring accents:

"Adele! Adele! *I am your father!*"

"You! Who are you? The white men—our foes. Touch me not! away white men! away!"

"Dear—dearest Adele! do not repel me—me, your father! You remember——"

"*My father!* My father was a great chief. He is dead. This is my father now. The sun is my father. I am a daughter of Moctezuma! I am a queen of the Navajoes!"

As she utters these words, a change seems to come over her spirit. She crouches no longer. She rises to her feet. Her screaming has ended, and she stands in an attitude of pride and indignation!

"O Adele!" continues Seguin, more earnest than ever, "look at me—look! Do you not remember? Look in my face! O Heaven! Here—see! Here is your mother, Adele! See! this is her picture—your angel mother. Look at it! Look, O Adele!"

Seguin, while he is speaking, draws a miniature from his bosom, and holds it before the eyes of the girl. It arrests her attention. She looks upon it, but without any signs of recognition. It is only to her a curious object.

She seems struck with his manner, frantic but entreating. She seems to regard him with wonder. Still she repels him. It is evident she knows him not. She has lost every recollection of him and his. She has forgotten the language of her childhood—she has forgotten her father, her mother—*she has forgotten all!*

I could not restrain my tears, as I looked upon the face of my friend—for I had grown to consider him such. Like one who has received a mortal wound, yet still lives, he stood in the centre of the group, silent and crushed. His head had fallen upon his breast. His cheek was blanched and bloodless—and his eye

wandered with an expression of imbecility painful to behold. I could imagine the terrible conflict that was raging within!

He made no farther effort to entreat the girl. He no longer offered to reproach her; but stood for some moments in the same attitude without speaking a word.

"Bring her away!" he muttered, at length, in a voice husky and broken; "bring her away! *Perhaps, in God's mercy, she may yet remember!*"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE WHITE SCALP.

WE repassed the horrid chamber, and emerged upon the lowermost terrace of the temple.

As I walked forward to the parapet there was a scene below that filled me with apprehension. A cloud seemed to come over my heart.

The impression was sudden ; and, at the moment, indefinite as to its cause. Was it the sight—for I saw it—of blood ? No. It could not be that. Blood had been before my eyes too often of late ; and I had become accustomed to its wanton shedding. It may have been partially the cause, but there were other sights and sounds, hardly affecting the eye and ear, yet sufficiently definite to impress my mind with fear and foreboding. There was a *bad electricity* in the air—not the natural but the moral atmosphere—that reached me through those mysterious channels, not yet traced by philosophy. Look back upon your experience. Have you not often felt sensible that wrath or other bad passions existed in the minds of men, before you could perceive it by any *definite* look, word, or action ?

As the wild animal foretells the hurricane when the atmosphere is tranquil, I felt instinctively that a dark scene was approaching.

Perhaps I drew my omens from the very tranquillity that reigned around. In the moral as in the physical world, there is a stillness that precedes the storm.

In front of the temple were the women of the village—girls, women and children—in all about two hundred. They were variously attired. Some were wrapped in their striped blankets

Some wore tilmas, and tunics of embroidered fawnskin, plumed and painted with dyes of vivid color. Some were dressed in the garb of civilized life—in rich satins that had been worn by the dames of the Del Norté; in flounces that had fluttered in the dance around the ankles of some gay maja!

Not a few in the crowd were entirely nude—without even the shielding of the figleaf.

They were all Indians, but of lighter and darker shades—differing in color as in expression of face. Some were old, wrinkled, and coarse; but there were many of them young, noble-like, and altogether beautiful.

They were grouped together in various attitudes. They had ceased their screaming, but murmured among themselves, in low and plaintive exclamations.

As I looked I saw blood running from their ears! It had dappled their throats, and spurted over their garments.

A glance satisfied me as to the cause of this. They had been rudely robbed of their golden hangings!

Near and around them stood the scalp-hunters in groups and afoot. They were talking in whispers and low mutterings. There were objects about their persons that attracted my eye. Curious articles of ornament or use peeped out from their pouches and haversacks. Bead-strings and pieces of shining metal—gold it was—hung around their necks and over their breasts. It was the plundered bijouterie of the savage maidens.

There were other objects upon which my eye rested with feelings of a deeper pain. Stuck behind the belts of many were scalps, fresh and reeking. Their knife-hilts and fingers were red. There was blood upon their hands—there was gloom in their glances.

The picture was appalling; and, adding to its awful impression, black clouds were, at the moment, rolling over the valley, and swathing the mountains in their opaque masses. The lightning jetted from peak to peak, followed by short claps of close and deafening thunder.

“Bring up the atajo!” shouted Seguin, as he descended the ladder with his daughter.

A signal was given; and shortly after the mules in charge of the arrieros, came stringing across the plain.

“Collect all the dry meat that can be found. Let it be packed as speedily as possible.”

In front of most of the houses there were strings of *tasajo*, hanging against the walls. There were also dried fruits and vegetables, *chile*, roots of the kamas, and skin-bags filled with pinons and choke-berries.

The meat was soon brought together; and several of the men assisted the arrieros in packing it.

“There will be barely enough,” said Seguin; “Here, Rube” continued he, calling to the old trapper. “Pick out your prisoners—Twenty will be as many as we can take. You know them—choose those most likely to tempt an exchange.”

So saying, the chief turned off toward the atajo leading his daughter—with the intention of mounting her on one of the mules.

Rube proceeded to obey the orders given him. In a short time he had collected a number of unresisting captives; and had put them aside from the rest. They were principally girls and young lads, whose dress and features bespoke them of the *noblesse* of the nation—the children of chiefs and warriors.

This movement was not regarded in silence. The men had drawn together, and commenced talking in loud and mutinous language.

“Wagh!” exclaimed Kirker, a fellow of brutal aspect; “Thar are wives a-piece, boys—why not every man help himself?—why not?”

“Kirker’s right,” rejoined another; “I’m ’most froze for a squaw! an’ I’ve made up my mind to have one, or bust.”

“But how are ye goin to feed ’em on the road? We ha’n’t meat, if we take one a-piece.”

“Meat be d—d!” ejaculated the second speaker; “we kin reach the Del Norte in four days or less. What do we want with so much meat?”

“There’s meat a plenty,” rejoined Kirker. “That’s all the captain’s palaver. If it runs out, we kin drop the weemen, and take what o’ them’s handiest to carry.”

This was said with a significant gesture, and a ferocity of expression revolting to behold.

“Now, boys! what say ye?”

“I freeze to Kirker.”

“And I.”

“And I.”

“I’m not goin’ to advise any body,” added the brute. “Ye may all do as ye d—d please about it; but this nigger’s not goin’ to starve in the midst o’ plenty.”

“Right, comrade! right, I say.”

Wal. First spoke, first pick, I reckon. That’s mountain law; so, old gal, I cottons to you. Come along, will yer?”

Saying this, he seized one of the Indians—a large fine-looking woman, roughly by the wrist; and commenced dragging her towards the atajo.

The woman screamed and resisted—frightened—not at what had been said, for she did not understand it—but terrified by the ruffian expression that was plainly legible in the countenance of the man.

“Shut up yer meat trap, will ye?” cried he, still pulling her towards the mules, “I’m not goin’ to eat ye. I’ve had a grist o’

wives in my time, and never ate one o' them yet. Wagh! Don't be so skeert. Come! mount hyar. Gee—yup!"

And, with this exclamation, he lifted the woman upon one of the mules.

"If ye don't sit still, I'll tie ye—mind that," and he held up the lasso, making signs of his determination.

A horrid scene now ensued.

A number of the scalp-hunters followed the example of their ruffian comrade. Each one chose the girl or woman he had fancied, and commenced hurrying her off to the atajo. The women shrieked. The men shouted and swore. Several scrambled for the same prize—a girl more beautiful than her companions. A quarrel was the consequence. Oaths and ejaculations rang out. Knives were drawn, and pistols cocked!

"Toss up for her!" cried one.

"Aye, that's fair; toss up, toss up!" shouted several.

The hint was adopted; the lots were cast; and the savage belle became the property of the winner.

In the space of a few minutes, nearly every mule in the atajo carried an Indian damsel.

Some of the hunters had taken no part in this Sabine proceeding. Some disapproved of it, for not all were bad, from motives of humanity. Others did not care for being "hampered with a squaw," but stood apart, savagely laughing at the scene.

During all this time, Seguin was on the other side of the building with his daughter. He had mounted her upon one of the mules; and covered her shoulders with his serapé. He was making such preparations for the journey, as the tender solitudes of the father suggested.

The noise at length attracted him; and leaving her in charge of his servants, he hurried round to the front.

"Comrades!" cried he, glancing at the mountain captives, and comprehending all that had occurred, "there are too many here. Are these whom you have chosen?" This question was directed to the trapper Rube.

"No," replied the latter, "them's 'em," and he pointed to the party he had picked out.

"Dismount these then, and place those you have selected upon the mules. We have a desert to cross, and it will be as much as we can do to pass it with that number."

And, without appearing to notice the scowling looks of his followers, he proceeded, in company with Rube and several others, to execute the command he had given.

The indignation of the hunters now showed itself in open mutiny. Fierce looks were exchanged, and threats uttered aloud.

"By G—d!" cried one, "I'll have my gal along, or her scalp."

"Vaya!" exclaimed another in Spanish. "Why take any of them? They're not worth the trouble, after all. There's not one of them worth the price of her own hair."

"Take the bar then, and leave the niggurs!" suggested a third.

"I say so too."

"And I!"

"I vote with you, hoss."

"Comrades!" said Seguin, turning to the mutineers, and speaking in a tone of extreme mildness, "remember your promise. Count the prisoners, as we agreed. I will answer for the payment of all."

"Can ye pay for them now?" asked a voice.

"You know that would be impossible."

"Pay for them now! pay for them now!" shouted several.

"Cash or scalps, say I!"

"*Carajo!* where is the Captain to get the money, when we reach El Paso, more than here? He's neither a Jew, nor a banker; and its news to me if he's grown so rich. Where then is all this money to come from?"

"Not from the *Cabildo*, unless the scalps are forthcoming; I'll warrant that."

"True, José! They'll give no money to him, more than to us; and we can get it ourselves if we show the skins for it. That we can."

"Wagh! what cares he for us, now that he has got what he wanted?"

"Not a niggur's d—n. He wudn't let us go by the Prieto, when we kud a' gathered the shining stuff in chunks."

"Now he wants us to throw away this chance too. We'd be d—d fools to do it, I say."

It struck me at this moment that I might interfere with success. Money seemed to be what the mutineers wanted; at least it was their alleged grievance; and rather than witness the fearful drama which appeared to be on the eve of enactment, I would have sacrificed my fortune.

"Men," cried I, speaking so that I could be heard above the din, "if you deem my word worth listening to, it is this. I have sent a cargo to Chihuahua with the last caravan. By the time we can get back to El Paso, the traders will have returned, and I will be placed in possession of funds double what you demand. If you will accept my promise, I will see that you be paid."

"Wagh! that talk's all very well, but what do we know of you or yer cargo?"

"Vaya! A bird in the hand's worth two in the bush."

"He's a trader. Who's goin' to take his word?"

"D—n his cargo! Scalps or cash, cash or scalps! that's this niggur's advice; an if ye don't take it, boys, ye may leave it; but it's all the pay ye'll ever crook yer c'aws on."

The men had tasted blood; and, like the tiger, they thirsted for more. There were glaring eyes on all sides, and the countenances of some exhibited an animal ferociousness, hideous to look upon. The half-robber discipline, that hitherto ruled in the land,

seemed to have completely departed; and the authority of the chief to be set at defiance.

On the other side stood the females, clinging and huddling together. They could not understand the mutinous language; but they saw threatening attitudes and angry faces. They saw knives drawn, and heard the cocking of guns and pistols. They knew *there was danger*; and they crouched together whimpering with fear.

Up to this moment, Seguin had stood giving directions for the mounting of his captives. His manner was strangely abstracted, as it had been, ever since the scene of meeting with his daughter. That greater care, gnawing his heart, seemed to render him insensible to what was passing. He was not so.

As Kirker ended, for he was the last speaker, a change came over Seguin's manner, quick as a flash of lightning. Suddenly rousing himself from his attitude of indifference, he stepped forward in front of the mutineers.

"Dare!" shouted he, in a voice of thunder. "Dare to dishonor your oaths! By the eternal God! the first man who raises knife or rifle shall die on the instant!"

There was a pause, and a moment of deep silence.

"I had made a vow," continued he, "should it please God to restore me my child, this hand should be stained with no more blood. Let any man force me to break that vow, and by heaven, his blood shall be the first to stain it!"

A vengeful murmur ran through the crowd, but no one replied.

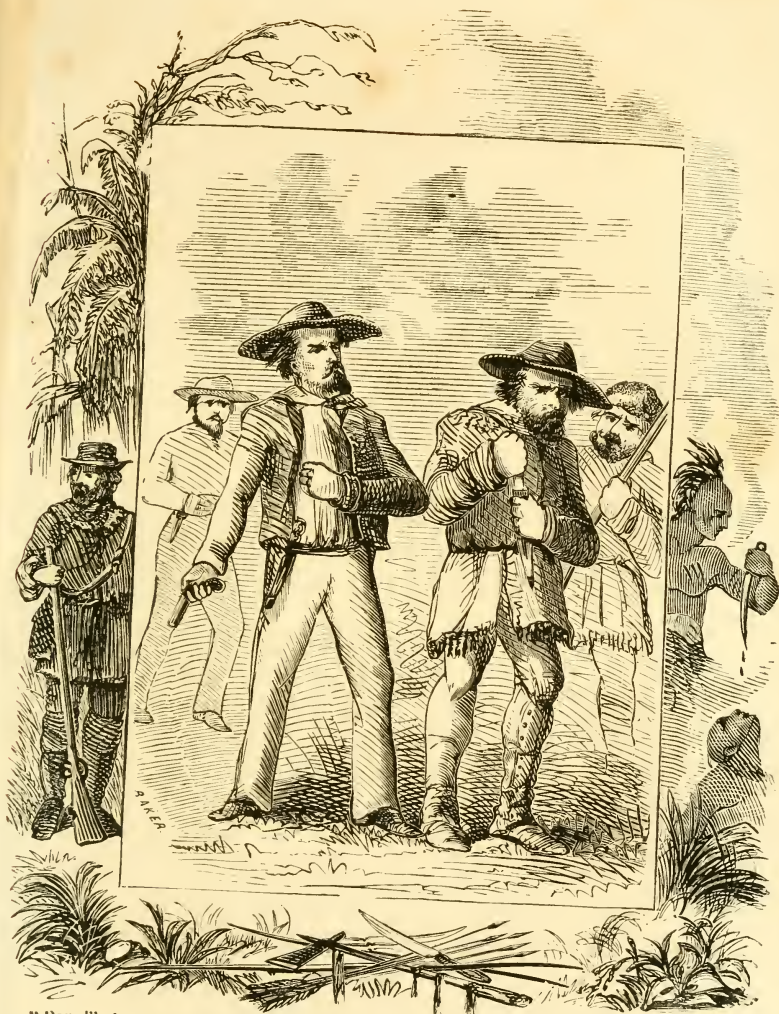
"You are but a cowardly brute, with all your bluster," he continued, turning round to Kirker; and looking him in the eye. "Up with that knife! Quick! or by the God of heaven, I will send this bullet through your ruffian heart!"

Seguin had drawn his pistol, and stood in an attitude that told he would execute the threat. His form seemed to have grown larger. His eye dilated, flashing as it rolled; and the man shrank before its glance! He saw death in it, if he disobeyed; and with a surly murmur, he fumbled mechanically at his belt, and thrust the blade back into its sheath!

But the mutiny was not yet quelled. These were men not so easily conquered. Fierce exclamations still continued; and the mutineers again began to encourage one another with shouts.

I had thrown myself alongside the chief, with my revolvers cocked and ready—resolved to stand by him to the death. Several others had done the same, among whom were Rube, Garey, Sanchez the bull-fighter, and the Maricopa.

The opposing parties were nearly equal, and a fearful conflict would have followed, had we fought; but at this moment, an object appeared that stifled the resentment of all. It was the common enemy!



"Dare!" shouted he, in a voice of thunder. "Dare to dishonor your oaths! By the eternal God! the first man who raises knife or rifle shall die on the instant!"—PAGE 220.



Away on the western border of the valley we could see dark objects, hundreds of them, coming over the plain. They were still at a great distance, but the practised eyes of the hunters knew them at a glance. They were horsemen; they were Indians; they were our pursuers, the Navajoes!

They were riding at full gallop, and strung over the prairie like hounds upon a run. In a twinkling they would be on us!

"Yonder!" cried Seguin, "yonder are scalps enough to satisfy you; but let us see to our own. Come! to your horses! On with the atajo! I will keep my word with you at the Pass. Mount! my brave fellows, mount!"

The last speech was uttered in a tone of reconciliation; but it needed not that to quicken the movements of the hunters. They knew too well their own danger. They could have sustained the attack among the houses, but it would only have been until the return of the main tribe, when they knew that every life would be taken. To make a stand at the town would be madness, and was not thought of. In a moment we were in our saddles; and the atajo, strung out with the captives and provisions, was hurrying off toward the woods. We purposed passing the defile that opened eastward; as our retreat by the other route was now cut off by the advancing horsemen.

Seguin had thrown himself at the head, leading the mule upon which his daughter was mounted. The rest followed, straggling over the plain, without rank or order.

I was among the last to leave the town. I had lingered behind purposely, fearing some outrage; and determined, if possible, to prevent it.

"At length," thought I, "they have all gone;" and putting spurs to my horse, I galloped after.

When I had ridden about a hundred yards from the walls, a loud yell rang behind me; and reining in my horse, I turned in the saddle and looked back. Another yell, wild and savage, directed me to the point whence the former had come.

On the highest roof of the temple two men were struggling. I knew them at a glance; and I knew, too, it was a *death struggle*. One was the medicine chief, as I could tell by the flowing white hair. The scanty skirt, and leggings; the naked ankles; the close fitting skull-cap, enabled me, easily, to distinguish his antagonist. It was the earless trapper!

The conflict was a short one. I had not seen the beginning of it, but I soon witnessed the *denouement*. As I turned, the trapper had forced his adversary against the parapet; and with his long muscular arm was bending him over its edge. In the other hand, uplifted, he brandished his knife!

I saw a quick flash, as the blade was plunged—a red gush spurted over the garments of the Indian—his arms dropped—his body doubled over the wall—balanced a moment—and then fell with a dull sodden sound upon the terrace below!

The same wild whoop again rang in my ears ; and the hunter disappeared from the roof.

I turned to ride on. I knew it was the settling of some old account—the winding up of some terrible revenge!

The clattering of hoofs sounded behind me ; and a horseman rode up alongside. I knew, without turning my head, that it was the trapper.

“Fair swop, they say, aint no stealin. Purty har too, it are. Wagh! It wont neyther match nor patch mine ; but it makes one’s feelins easier.”

Puzzled by this speech, I turned to ascertain its meaning. I was answered by the sight that met my eye. An object was hanging from the old man’s belt, like a streak of snow-white flax. But it was not that. It was hair. It was a scalp!

There were drops of blood struggling down the silvery strands as they shook ; and across them, near the middle, was a broad red band. It was the track of the trapper’s knife *where he had wiped it!*

CHAPTER XL.

THE CANON FIGHT.

WE entered the woods and followed the Indian trail up stream. We hurried forward as fast as the atajo could be driven. A scramble of five miles brought us to the eastern end of the valley. Here the sierras impinged upon the river, forming a canon. It was a grim gap, similar to that we had passed on entering from the west, but still more fearful in its features. Unlike the former, there was no road over the mountains on either side. The valley was headed in by precipitous cliffs, and the trail lay through the canon—up the bed of the stream. The latter was shallow. During freshets it became a torrent; and then the valley was inaccessible from the east, but that was a rare occurrence in these rainless regions.

We entered the canon, without halting: and galloped over detritus, and round huge boulders that lay in its bed. Far above us rose the frowning cliffs, thousands of feet overhead. Great rocks scarped out, abutting over the stream. Shaggy pines hung top downward, clinging in their seams. Shapeless bunches of cacti and mezcalms crawled along the cliffs—their picturesque but gloomy foliage adding to the wildness of the scene.

It was dark within the pass—from the shadow of the jutting masses; but now darker than wont, for black storm-clouds were swathing the cliffs overhead. Through these, at short intervals, the lightning forked and flashed, glancing in the water at our feet. The thunder, in quick, sharp percussions, broke over the ravine; but as yet it rained not.

We plunged hurriedly through the shallow stream, following

the guide. There were places not without danger, where the water swept around angles of the cliff with an impetuosity that almost lifted our horses from their feet; but we had no choice; and we scrambled on—urging our animals with voice and spur.

After riding for a distance of several hundred yards we reached the head of the canon, and climbed out on the bank.

“Now Cap’n,” cried the guide, reining up, and pointing to the entrance, “hyur’s yer place to make stand. We kin keep them back till thur sick i’ the guts; that’s what *we* kin do.”

“You are sure there is no pass that leads out, but this one?”

“Ne’er a crack that a cat kud get out at; that are ’ceptin they go back by the other eend; and that’ll take them a round-about o’ two days, I reckon.”

“We will defend this, then. Dismount, men! Throw yourselves behind the rocks!”

“If ’ee take my advice, Cap., I’d let the mules and weemen keep for’ard, with a wheen o’ the men to look arter ’em—them that’s ridin’ the meanest critters. It’ll be nose and tail when we do go; and if they starts now, yer see we can easy catch up with ’em t’other side o’ the perairer.”

“You are right, Rube. We cannot stay long here. Our provisions will give out. They must move ahead. Is that mountain near the line of our course, think you?”

As Seguin spoke, he pointed to a snow-crowned peak, that towered over the plain, far off to the eastward.

“The trail we oughter take for the old mine passes close by it, Cap’n. To the southart o’ yon snowy, there’s a pass—it’s the way I got clur myself.”

“Very well—the party can take the mountain for their guide. I will despatch them at once.”

About twenty men, who rode the poorest horses, were selected from the band. These, guarding the atajo and captives, immediately set out and rode in the direction of the snowy mountain. El Sol went with this party—in charge of Dacoma and the daughter of our chief. The rest of us prepared to defend the pass.

Our horses were tied in a defile; and we took our stands where we could command the embouchure of the canon with our rifles.

We waited in silence for the approaching foe. As yet, no war-whoop had reached us; but we knew that our pursuers could not be far off; and we knelt behind the rocks, straining our eyes down the dark ravine. It is difficult to give an idea of our position by the pen. The ground we had selected as the point of defence was unique in its formation, and not easily described. It is necessary you should know something of its peculiar character, in order to comprehend what followed

The stream, after meandering over a shallow, shingly channel, entered the canon through a vast, gate-like gap, between two giant portals. One of these was the abrupt ending of the granite ridge—the other a detached mass of stratified rock. Below this

gate the channel widened for a hundred yards or so, where its bed was covered with loose boulders and logs of drift-timber. Still farther down, the cliffs approached each other so near that only two horsemen might ride between them abreast; and beyond this the channel again widened, and the bed of the stream was filled with rocks—huge fragments that had fallen from the mountain.

The place we occupied was among the rocks and drift—*within the canon*, and below the great gap which formed its mouth. We had chosen the position from necessity; as at this point the bank shelved out and offered a way to the open country, by which our pursuers could outflank us, should we allow them to get so far up. It was necessary, therefore, to prevent this; and we placed ourselves to defend the lower or second narrowing of the channel. We knew that below that point beetling cliffs walled in the stream on both sides—so that it would be impossible for them to ascend out of its bed. If we could restrain them from making a rush at the shelving bank, we would have them penned up from any farther advance. They could only flank our position by returning to the valley, and going about by the western end—a distance of fifty miles at the least. At all events, we should hold them in check until the atajo had got a long start; and then, trusting to our horses, we intended to follow it in the night. We knew that in the end we must abandon the defence, as the want of provisions would not allow us to hold out for any length of time.

At the command of our leader, we had thrown ourselves among the rocks. The thunder was now pealing over our heads, and reverberating through the canon. Black clouds rolled along the cliffs, split and torn by brilliant jets. Big drops, still falling thinly, slapped down upon the stones.

As Seguin had told me, rain, thunder, and lightning are rare phenomena in these regions; but when they do occur, it is with that violence which characterises the storms of the tropics. The elements, escaping from their wonted continence, rage in fiercer war. The long gathering electricity—suddenly displaced from its equilibrium—seems to revel in havoc, rending asunder the harmonies of nature.

The eye of the geologist in scanning the surface of this plateau land, could not be mistaken in the character of its atmosphere. The dread canons, the deep *barrancas*, the broken banks of streams, and the clay-cut channels of the arroyos, all testified that we were in a land of sullen floods.

Away to the east—towards the head waters of the river—we could see that the storm was raging in its full fury. The mountains in that direction were no longer visible. Thick rain clouds were descending upon them; and we could hear the “sough” of the falling water. We knew that it would soon be upon us!

"What's keepin them anyhow?" inquired a voice.

Our pursuers had time to have been up. The delay was unexpected.

"The Lord only knows," answered another. "I spose thar puttin on a fresh coat o' paint at the town."

"They'll get their paint washed off, I reckon. Look to yer primin, hosses!—that's my advice."

"By Gosh! it's a going to come down in spouts."

"That's the game, boyees!—hooray for that!" cried old Rube.

"Why? Do ye want to git soaked, old case?"

"That's adzactly what this child wants."

"Well—it's more'n I do. I'd like to know what ye want to get wet for. Do ye wish to put your old carcass into an agey?"

"If it rains two hours, do 'ee see?" continued Rube, without paying attention to the last interrogatory; "we needen't stay hyur, do 'ee see?"

"Why not, Rube?" inquired Seguin, with interest.

"Why Cap," replied the guide; "I've seed a skift o' a shower make this hyur crik that 'ee wudn't care to wade it. Hooray! it are a comin, sure enuf! Hooray!"

As the trapper uttered these exclamations, a vast black cloud came rolling down from the east, until its giant wings canopied the defile. It was filled with rumbling thunder, breaking at intervals into louder percussions, as the red bolts passed hissing through it. From this cloud the rain fell, not in drops, but—as the hunter had predicted—in "spouts."

The men—hastily throwing the skirts of their hunting shirts over their gun-locks—remained silent, under the pelting of the storm.

Another sound, heard between the peals, now called our attention. It resembled the continuous noise of a train of wagons passing along a gravelly road. It was the sound of hoof-strokes on the shingly bed of the canon. It was the horse-tread of the approaching Navajoes!

Suddenly it ceased. They had halted. For what purpose? Perhaps to reconnoitre.

This conjecture proved to be correct; for in a few moments a small red object appeared over a distant rock. It was the forehead of an Indian, with its vermilion paint. It was too distant for the carry of a rifle; and the hunters watched it without moving.

Soon another appeared, and another, and then a number of dark forms were seen lurking from rock to rock, as they advanced up the canon. Our pursuers had dismounted; and were approaching us on foot!

Our faces were concealed by the "wreck" that covered the stones; and the Indians had not yet discovered us. They were evidently in doubt as to whether we had gone on; and this was their van-guard making the necessary reconnoissance.

In a short time the foremost, by starts and runs, had got close up to the narrow part of the canon. There was a boulder below this point, and the upper part of the Indian's head showed itself for an instant over the rock. At the same instant half a dozen rifles cracked; the head disappeared; but the moment after, an object was seen down upon the pebbles at the base of the boulder. It was the brown arm of the savage, lying palm upward! We knew that the leaden messengers had done their work.

The pursuers—though at the expense of one of their number—had now ascertained the fact of our presence, as well as our position; and the advance party were seen retreating as they had approached.

The men, who had fired, reloaded their pieces; and kneeling down as before, watched with sharp eyes and cocked rifles.

It was a long time before we heard anything more of the enemy, but we knew that they were deliberating on some plan of attack.

There was but one way by which they could defeat us—by charging up the canon, and fighting us hand to hand. By an attack of this kind their main loss would be in the first volley. They might ride upon us before we could reload; and—far outnumbering us—would soon decide the day with their long lances. We knew all this; but we knew too, that a first volley, when well delivered, invariably staggers an Indian charge; and we relied on such a hope for our safety.

We had arranged to fire by platoons, and thus have the advantage of a second discharge, should the Indians not retreat at the first.

For nearly an hour the hunters crouched under the drenching rain, looking only to keep dry the locks of their pieces. The water, in muddy rivulets, began to trickle through the shingle; and eddying around the rocks covered the wide channel in which we now stood, ankle deep. Both above and below us, the stream—gathered up by the narrowing of the channel—was running with considerable velocity.

The sun had set—at least it seemed so in the dismal ravine where we were. We were growing impatient for the appearance of our enemy.

“Perhaps they have gone round,” suggested one.

“No; thar a waitin’ till night. They’ll try it then.”

“Let ’em wait then,” muttered Rube, “ef thur green enuf. A half an hour more ’ll do; or this child don’t understan’ weather sign.”

“Hist! hist!” cried several voices together. “See! they are coming!”

All eyes were bent down the pass. A crowd of dark objects appeared in the distance, filling up the bed of the stream. They were the Indians. And on horseback! We knew from this that they were about to make a charge. Their movements too con-

firmed it. They had formed two-deep, and held their bows ready to deliver a flight of arrows as they galloped up!

"Look out boyees!" cried Rube, "thur a conin' now in airnest. Look to your sights, and give 'em gos, do 'ee hear?"

As the trapper spoke, two hundred voices broke out into a simultaneous yell. It was the war-cry of the Navajoes!

As its vengeful notes rang up the canon, they were answered by loud cheers from the hunters, mingled with the wild whoops of their Delaware and Shawano allies.

The Indians halted for a moment beyond the narrowing of the canon, until those who were rearmost should close up. Then, uttering another cry, they dashed forward into the gap!

So sudden was their charge, that several of them had got fairly through before a shot was fired. Then came the reports of the guns—the "crack—crack—crack" of the rifles—the louder detonations of the Spanish pieces, mingled with the whizzing sound of Indian arrows. Shouts of encouragement and defiance were given on both sides; and groans were heard, as the grooved bullet or the poisoned barb tore up the yielding flesh.

Several of the Indians had fallen at the first volley. A number had ridden forward to the spot of our ambush, and fired their arrows in our faces. But our rifles had not all been emptied; and these daring savages were seen to drop from their saddles at the straggling and successive reports.

The main body wheeled behind the rocks, and were now forming for a second charge. This was the moment of danger. Our guns were idle, and we could not prevent them from passing the gap, and getting through to the open country.

I saw Seguin draw his pistol, and rush forward, calling upon those who were similarly armed to follow his example. We ran after our leader down to the very jaws of the canon, and stood waiting the charge.

It was soon to come—for the enemy exasperated by many circumstances, were determined upon our destruction, cost what it might. Again we heard their fierce war cry; and amidst its wild echoes the savages came galloping into the gap.

"Now's yur time," cried a voice, "fire! Hooray!"

The cracks of fifty pistols were almost simultaneous. The foremost horses reared up, and fell back, kicking and sprawling in the gap. They fell, as it were, in a body—completely choking up the channel. Those who came on behind, urged their animals forward. Some stumbled on the heap of fallen bodies. Their horses rose and fell again, trampling their dead and living riders among their feet. Some struggled over and fought us with their lances. We struck back with our clubbed guns, and closed upon them with our knives and tomahawks.

The stream rose and foamed against the rocks, pent back by the prostrate animals. We stood thigh-deep in the gathering

flood. The thunder roared over head, and the lightning flashed in our faces, as though the elements took part in the conflict!

The yelling continued wild and vengeful as ever. The hunters answered it with fierce shouts. Oaths flew from foaming lips; and men grappled in the embrace that ended only in death!

And now the water—gathered into a deep dam—lifted the bodies of the animals that had hitherto obstructed it, and swept them out of the gap. The whole force of the enemy would be upon us. O God, they are crowding up, and our guns are empty!

At this moment a new sound echoed in our ears. It was not the shouts of men, nor the detonation of guns, nor the pealing of the thunder. It was the *hoarse roaring of the torrent!*

A warning cry was heard behind us. A voice called out “run for your lives! to the bank! to the bank!”

I turned and beheld my companions rushing for the slope, uttering words of terror and caution. At the same instant my eyes became fixed upon an approaching object. Not twenty yards above where I stood, and just entering the canon, came a brown and foaming mass. It was water—bearing on its crested front huge logs of drift, and the torn branches of trees. It seemed as though the sluice of some great dam had been suddenly carried away, and this was the first gush of the escaping flood!

As I looked, it struck the portals of the canon with a percussion like thunder; and then, rearing back, piled up to a height of twenty feet. The next moment it came surging through the gap!

I heard their terrified cry as the Indians wheeled their horses and fled. I ran for the bank, following my companions. I was impeded by the water that already reached to my thighs; but with desperate energy I plunged and sweltered through it, till I had gained a point of safety.

I had hardly climbed out, when the torrent rolled past with a hissing, seething sound. I stood to observe it. From where I was, I could see down the ravine for a long reach. The Indians were already in a full gallop, and I saw the tails of their hindmost horses just disappearing around the rocks!

The bodies of dead and wounded were still lying in the channel. There were hunters as well as Indians. The wounded screamed, as they saw the coming flood. Those who had been our comrades called to us for help. We could do nothing to save them. Their cries had hardly reached us, when they were lifted, upon the crest of the current, like so many feathers, and carried off with the velocity of projectiles!

“Thar’s three good fellows gone under! Wagh!”

“Who are they?” asked Seguin, and the men turned round with inquiring looks.

“Thar’s one Delaware, and big Jim Harris, and—”

“Who is the third man that’s missing? Can any one tell?”

"I think, Captain, it's Kirker."

"It *is* Kirker, by the eternal! I seed him down. Wagh! They'll lift *his* har to a sartinty."

"Aye, they'll fish him out below. That's a sure case."

"They'll fish out a good haul o' thur own, I reckon'. It'll be a tight race, anyhow. I've heern o' a horse runnin' agin a thunder shower; but them niggurs 'll make good time, if thur tails aint wet afore they git to t'other eend—*they* will."

As the trapper spoke, the floating and still struggling bodies of his comrades were carried to a bend in the canon, and whirled out of sight. The channel was now filled with the foaming yellow flood, that frothed against the rocks as it forged onward.

Our danger was over for the time. The canon had become impassable; and, after gazing for awhile upon the torrent—most of us with feelings of awe—we turned away, and walked toward the spot where we had left our horses.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE BARRANCA.

WE staked our horses upon the open plain ; and returning to the thicket cut down wood, and kindled fires. We felt secure. Our pursuers, even had they escaped back to the valley, could not now reach us, except by turning the mountains, or waiting for the falling of the flood !

We knew that that would be as sudden as its rise, should the rain cease, but the storm still raged with unabated fury.

We could soon overtake the atajo ; but we determined to remain for some time at the canon, until men and horses had refreshed themselves by eating. Both were in need of food, as the hurried events of the preceding days had given no opportunity for a regular bivouack.

The fires were soon blazing under shelter of the overhanging rocks ; and the dried meat was boiled for our suppers, and eaten with sufficient relish. Supper ended, we sat, with smoking garments, around the red embers. Several of the men had received wounds. These were rudely dressed by their comrades—the doctor having gone forward with the atajo.

We remained for several hours by the canon. The tempest still played around us, and the water rose higher and higher. This was exactly what we wished for ; and we had the satisfaction of seeing the flood increase to such a height that, as Rube assured us, it could not subside for hours. It was then resolved that we should continue our journey.

It was near midnight, when we drew our pickets and rode off. The rain had partially blinded the trail by El Sol and his party ; but the men who now followed it were not much used to guide

posts; and Rube, acting as leader, lifted it, at a trot. At intervals the flashes of lightning showed the mule tracks in the mud, and the white peak that beacons us in the distance.

We travelled all night. An hour after sunrise we overtook the atajo, near the base of the snow mountain. We halted in the mountain pass; and after a short while spent in cooking and eating breakfast, continued our journey across the Sierra. The road led through a dry ravine, into an open plain, that stretched east and south beyond the reach of our vision. It was a desert.

I will not detail the events that occurred to us in the passage of that terrible *jornaã*. They were similar to those we experienced in the deserts to the west. We suffered from thirst, making one stretch of sixty miles without water. We passed over sage-covered plains, without a living object to break the death-like monotony that extended around us. We cooked our meals over the blaze of the *artemisia*. But our provisions gave out; and the pack-mules, one by one, fell under the knives of the hungry hunters. By night we camped without fires. We dared not kindle them; for though, as yet, no pursuers appeared, we knew they must be on our trail. We had travelled with such speed, that they had not been able to come up with us.

For three days we headed towards the south-east. On the evening of the third we descried the Mimbres mountains towering up on the eastern border of the desert. The peaks of these were well known to the hunters, and became our guides as we journeyed on.

We approached the Mimbres in a diagonal direction, as it was our purpose to pass through the Sierra by the route of the old mine, once the prosperous property of our chief. To him, every feature of the landscape was a familiar object. I observed that his spirits rose as we proceeded onward.

At sundown we reached the head of the Barranca del Oro—a vast cleft that traversed the plain, leading down to the deserted mine. This chasm, like the fissure of some terrible earthquake, extended for a distance of twenty miles. On either side was a trail; for on both the table-plain ran in horizontally to the very lips of the abyss. About midway to the mine, on the left brow, the guide knew of a spring, and we proceeded toward this with the intention of camping by the water.

We dragged wearily along. It was near midnight when we arrived at the spring. Our horses were unsaddled and staked on the open plain.

Here Seguin had resolved that we should rest longer than usual. A feeling of security had come over him as he approached these well remembered scenes.

There was a thicket of young cotton trees and willows fringing the spring, and in the heart of this a fire was kindled. Another mule was sacrificed to the manes of hunger; and the hunters, after devouring the tough steaks, flung themselves upon the ground, and slept. The horseguard only, out by the *Caballada*, stood leaning upon his rifle silent and watchful.

Resting my head in the hollow of my saddle, I lay down by the fire. Seguin was near me with his daughter. The Mexican girls and the Indian captives lay clustered over the ground, wrapped in their tilmas and striped blankets. They were all asleep, or seemed so.

I was wearied as the rest, but my thoughts kept me awake. My mind was busy with the bright future. "Soon," thought I, "shall I escape from these horrid scenes. Soon shall I breathe a purer atmosphere, in the sweet companionship of my beloved Zœe. Beautiful Zœe! before two days shall have passed, I will again be with you—hold you to my bosom—press your impassioned lips—call you my loved, my own! Again shall we wander through the silent garden by the river groves—again shall we sit upon the moss-grown seats in the still evening hours—again shall we utter those wild words that caused our hearts to vibrate with a mutual happiness! Zœe, pure and innocent as the angels! The child-like simplicity of that question—"Enrique, what is to marry?" Ah! sweet Zœe, you shall soon learn. Ere long shall I teach you. Ere long wilt thou be mine—for ever mine!

Zœe! Zœe! are you awake? Do you lie sleepless on your soft couch? or am I present in your dreams? Do you long for my return, as I to hasten it? Oh! that the night were past! I cannot wait for rest. I could ride on sleepless—tireless—on—on!"

My eye rested upon the features of Adele, upturned and shining in the blaze of the fire. I traced the outlines of her sister's face—the high noble front, the arched eyebrow, and the curving nostril. But the brightness of complexion was not there—the smile of angelic innocence was not there! The hair was dark, the skin browned; and there was a wildness in the expression of the eye, stamped, no doubt, by the experience of many a savage scene. Still was she beautiful, but it was beauty of a far less spiritual order than that of my betrothed.

Her bosom rose and fell in short irregular pulsations. Once or twice, while I was gazing, she half awaked, and muttered some words in the Indian tongue. Her sleep was troubled and broken.

During the journey, Seguin had waited upon her with all the tender solicitude of a father; but she had received his attentions with indifference, or at most regarded them with a cold thankfulness. It was difficult to analyze the feelings that actuated her. Most of the time she remained silent and sullen.

The father endeavored, once or twice, to resuscitate the memories of her childhood, but without success; and with sorrow at his heart he had each time relinquished the attempt.

I thought he was asleep. I was mistaken. On looking more attentively in his face I saw that he was regarding her with deep interest, and listening to the broken phrases that fell from her lips. There was a picture of sorrow, and anxiety, in his look that touched me to the heart.

As I watched him, the girl murmured some words—to me unintelligible—but, among them, I recognised the name “Dacoma.”

I saw that Seguin started as he heard it.

“Poor child!” said he, seeing that I was awake, “she is dreaming, and a troubled dream it is. I have half a mind to wake her out of it.”

“She needs rest,” I replied.

“Aye—if that be rest. Listen! again ‘Dacoma!’”

“It is the name of the captive chief.”

“Aye; they were to have been married, according to their laws.”

“But how did you learn this?”

“From Rube: he heard it while he was a prisoner at the town.”

“And did she love him, do you think?”

“No. It appears not. She had been adopted as the daughter of the medicine chief, and Dacoma claimed her for a wife. On certain considerations she was to have been given to him; but she feared, not loved him, as her words now testify. Poor child! a wayward fate has been hers.”

“In two journeys more, her sufferings will be over. She will be restored to her home—to her mother.”

“Ah! if she should remain thus it will break the heart of my poor Adele.”

“Fear not, my friend. Time will restore her memory. I think I have heard of a parallel circumstance among the frontier settlements of the Mississippi.”

“Oh! true; there have been many. We will hope for the best.”

“Once in her home, the objects that surrounded her in her younger days may strike a chord in her recollection. She may yet remember all. May she not?”

“Hope—hope.”

“At all events the companionship of her mother and sister will soon win her from the thoughts of savage life. Fear not! She will be your daughter again.”

I urged these ideas for the purpose of giving consolation. Seguin made no reply; but I saw that the painful and anxious expression still remained, all clouding his features.

My own heart was not without its heaviness. A dark foreboding began to creep into it from some undefined cause. Were his thoughts in communion with mine?

"How long," I asked, "before we can reach your house on the Del Norte?"

I scarce knew why I was prompted to put this question. Some fear that we were still in peril from the pursuing foe.

"The day after to-morrow," he replied, "by the evening. Heaven grant that we may find *them* safe!"

I started as the words issued from his lips. They had brought pain in an instant. This was the true cause of my undefined forebodings.

"You have fears?" I inquired hastily.

"I have."

"Of what? of whom?"

"The Navajoes."

"The Navajoes!"

"Yes. My mind has not been easy, since I saw them go eastward from the Pinon. I cannot understand why they did so—unless they meditated an attack on some settlements that lie on the old Llanos' trail. If not that, my fears are that they have made a descent on the valley of El Paso—perhaps on the town itself. One thing may have prevented them from attacking the town—the separation of Dacoma's party—which would leave them too weak for that; but still the more danger to the small settlements, both north and south of it.

The uneasiness I had hitherto felt, arose from an expression which Seguin had dropped at the Pinon spring. My mind had dwelt upon it, from time to time, during our desert journeyings; but as he did not speak of it afterwards, I thought that he had not attached so much importance to it. I had reasoned wrongly.

"It is just probable," continued the chief, "that the Pasesos may defend themselves. They have done so heretofore, with more spirit than any of the other settlements; and hence their long exemption from being plundered. Partly that, and partly because our band has kept their neighborhood for a length of time—what the savages well know. It is to be hoped that the fear of meeting with us will prevent them from coming into the Jornada, north of the town. If so, *ours* have escaped."

"God grant," I faltered, "it may be thus!"

"Let us sleep!" said Seguin. "Perhaps our apprehensions are idle, and they can benefit nothing. To-morrow we will march forward without halt—if our animals can bear it. Go to rest, my friend—you have not much time."

So saying, he laid his head in the saddle, and composed himself to sleep. In a short while, as if by an act of volition, he appeared to be in a profound slumber!

With me it was different. Sleep was banished from my eyes; and I tossed about with a throbbing pulse, and a brain filled with

fearful fancies. The very reaction from the bright dreams in which I had just been indulging, rendered my apprehensions painfully active. I began to imagine scenes that might be enacting at that very moment. My betrothed struggling in the arms of some licentious savage—for these southern Indians, I knew, possessed none of the cold continence and chivalrous delicacy, that characterise the red men of the “forest.”

I fancied her carried into rude captivity—becoming the “squaw” of some brutal brave—or, still worse the contested prize of many, and then—O God! O God!

With the agony of thought, I rose to my feet; and rushed out upon the prairie.

Half frantic, I wandered, not heeding whither I went. I must have walked for hours, but I took no note of the time.

I strayed back upon the edge of the Barranca. The moon was shining brightly, but the grim chasm yawning away into the earth at my feet, lay buried in silence and darkness. My eye could not pierce its fathomless gloom.

I saw the camp and the caballada far above me on the bank; but my strength was exhausted; and giving way to my weariness, I sank down upon the very brink of the abyss. The keen torture, that had hitherto sustained me, was followed by a feeling of utter lassitude. Sleep conquered agony, and I slept.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE FOE.

I MUST have slept an hour or more. Had my dreams been realities, they would have filled the measure of an age.

At length the raw air of the morning chilled and awaked me. The moon had gone down, for I remembered that she was close to the horizon when I last saw her. Still it was far from being dark, for I could see to a considerable distance through the fog.

"Perhaps the day is breaking," thought I, and I turned my face to the east. It was, as I had guessed. The eastern sky was streaked with light—it was morning.

I knew it was the intention of Seguin to start early; and I was about summoning resolution to raise myself, when voices broke on my ear. There were short exclamatory phrases, and hoof-strokes upon the prairie turf!

"They are up and preparing to start!" and with this thought I leaped to my feet, and commenced hurrying towards the camp.

I had not walked ten paces, when I became conscious that the voices I heard were *behind me!*

I stopped and listened. Yes; beyond a doubt I was going *from* them.

"I have mistaken the way to the camp!" and I stepped forward to the edge of the Barranca, for the purpose of assuring myself. What was my astonishment to find that I *had* been going in the right direction; and the sounds were coming from the opposite quarter!

My first thought was, that the band had passed me, and were moving on the route.

"But no—Seguin would not—oh! he has sent out a party to search for me—it is they."

I called out "Hilloa!" to let them know where I was. There was no answer; and I shouted again, louder than before. All at once, the sounds ceased. I knew the horsemen were listening,

and I called once more at the top of my voice. There was a moment's silence—then I could hear a muttering of many voices, and the trampling of horses as they galloped towards me.

I wondered that none of them had yet answered my signal, but my wonder was changed into consternation, when I perceived that the approaching party were *on the other side of the Barranca!*

Before I could recover from my surprise, they were opposite me and reining up on the bank of the chasm. They were still three hundred yards distant—the width of the gulf—but I could see them plainly through the thin and filmy fog. There appeared in all about a hundred horsemen; and their long spears, their plumed heads, and half naked bodies, told me at a glance *they were Indians!*

I stayed to inquire no farther; but, ran with all my speed toward the camp. I could see the horsemen on the opposite cliff keeping pace with me at a slow gallop!

On reaching the spring, I found the hunters in surprise, and vaulting into their saddles. Seguin and a few others had gone out on the extreme edge, and were looking over. They had no thought of an immediate retreat—as the enemy, having the advantage of the light, had already discovered the strength of our party.

Though only a distance of three hundred yards separated the hostile bands, twenty miles would have to be passed before they could meet in battle! On this account, Seguin and the hunters felt secure for the time; and it was hastily resolved to remain where we were, until we had examined who and what were our opponents.

They had halted on the opposite bank; and sat in their saddles, gazing across. They seemed puzzled at our appearance. It was still too dark for them to distinguish our complexions. Soon, however, it grew clearer; our peculiar dress and equipments were recognized: and a wild yell—the Navajo war cry—came pealing over the abyss!

“It's Dacoma's party!” cried a voice; “they have taken the wrong side o' the gully.”

“No,” exclaimed another, “Thar's too few of them for Dacoma's men. Thar aint over a hundred.”

“Maybe the flood tuk the rest,” suggested the first speaker.

“Wagh! how could they a missed our trail that's as plain as a wagon-track. 'Taint them nohow.”

“Who then? It's Navagh. I kud tell thar yelp if I war sleepin'.”

"Them's head-chief's niggurs," said Rube at this moment riding forward. "Lookkee! yander's the old skunk himself, on the spotted hoss!"

"You think it is they, Rube?" inquired Seguin.

"Sure as shootin', Cap."

"But where are the rest of this band? These are not all."

"They aint far off, I'll be bound. Hish-sh! I hear them a comin'."

"Yonder's a crowd! Look, boys! look!"

Through the fog, now floating away, a dark body of mounted men was seen coming up the opposite side. They advanced with shouts and ejaculations, as though they were driving cattle. It was so. As the fog rose up, we could see a drove of horses, horned cattle, and sheep, covering the plain to a great distance. Behind these rode mounted Indians—who galloped to and fro—goaded the animals with their spears, and pushing them forward.

"Lord, what a plunder!" exclaimed one of the hunters.

"Aye, them's the fellows have made something by thar expedition. We are comin' back empty as we went. Wagh!"

I had been engaged in saddling my horse, and at this moment came forward. It was not upon the Indians that my eye rested, nor upon the plundered cattle. Another object attracted my gaze, and sent the blood curdling to my heart.

Away in the rear of the advancing drove I saw a small party, distinct from the rest. Their light dresses, fluttering in the wind, told me that they were not Indians. They were women. They were captives!

There appeared to be about twenty in all; but my feelings were such that I took little heed of their number. I saw that they were mounted, and that each was guarded by an Indian, who rode by her side.

With a palpitating heart I passed my eye over the group from one to the other. But the distance was too great to distinguish the features of any of them.

I turned toward the chief. He was standing with the glass to his eye. I saw him start—his cheek suddenly blanched—his lips quivered convulsively, and the instrument fell from his fingers to the ground! With a wild look he staggered back, crying out—

"Mon dieu! Mon dieu! O God, thou hast stricken me now!"

I snatched up the telescope to assure myself. But it needed not that. As I was raising it, an object running along the opposite side caught my eye. It was the dog Alp! I levelled the glass; and the next moment was gazing through it on the face of my betrothed!

So close did she seem that I could hardly restrain myself from calling to her. I could distinguish her pale, beautiful features. Her cheek was wan with weeping, and her rich golden hair hung dishevelled from her shoulders, reaching to the withers of her

horse. She was covered with a *serape*, and a young Indian rode beside her, mounted upon a showy horse, and dressed in the habiliments of a Mexican hussar!

I looked at none of the others, though a glance showed me her mother—in the string of captives that came after.

The drove of horses and cattle soon passed up, and the females with their guards arrived opposite us. The captives were left back on the prairie, while the warriors rode forward, to where their comrades had halted by the brow of the barranca.

It was now bright day—the fog had cleared away—and across the impassable gulf the hostile bands stood gazing at each other!

CHAPTER XLIII.

NEW MISERY.

It was a most singular rencontre. Here were two parties of men—heart foes to one another—each returning from the country of the other, loaded with plunder, and carrying a train of captives! They had met midway, and stood within musket range, gazing at each other with feelings of the most bitter hostility; and yet a conflict was as impossible as though twenty miles of the earth's surface lay between them!

On one side were the Navajoes, with consternation in their looks—for the warriors had recognised their children. On the other stood the Scalp-hunters—not a few of whom, in the captive train of their enemies, could distinguish the features of a wife, a sister, or a daughter!

Each gazed upon the other with hostile hearts and glances of revenge. Had they met thus on the open prairie they would have fought one another to the death. It seemed as though the hand of God had interposed to prevent the ruthless shedding of blood, which, but for the gulf that lay between these foemen, would certainly have ensued.

I cannot describe how I felt at that moment. I remember that, all at once, I was inspired with a new vigour both of mind and body. Hitherto I had been little more than a passive spectator of the events of our expedition. I had been acting without any stimulating heart-motive. Now I *had* one that aroused me to a desperate energy.

A thought occurred to me, and I ran up to Seguin to communicate it. He was beginning to recover from the terrible blow

The men had learnt the cause of his strange behaviour, and stood around him—some of them endeavouring to console him. Few of them knew aught of the family affairs of their chief; but they had heard of his earlier misfortunes—the loss of his mine—the ruin of his property—the captivity of his child. Now, when it became known that among the prisoners of the enemy were his wife and daughter, even the rude hearts of the hunters were touched with pity at his more than common sufferings. Compassionate exclamations were heard from them, mingled with expressions of their determination to restore the captives, or die in the attempt.

It was with the intention of exciting such a feeling that I had come forward. It was my design, out of my small stock of world's wealth, to set a premium on devotedness and valour; but I saw that nobler motives had anticipated me, and I remained silent.

Seguin seemed pleased at the loyalty of his comrades; and began to exhibit his wonted energy. Hope again had possession of him. The men had clustered around him to offer their advice, and listen to his directions.

"We kin fight them, Captain, even handed," said the trapper Garey. "Thar aint over two hundred."

"Jest a hundred and ninety-six," interposed a hunter, "without the weemen. I've counted them—that's thur number."

"Wal," continued Garey, "thar's some difference atween us in point o' pluck, I reckon; and what's wantin' in number we'll make up wi' our rifles. I never valleys two to one wi' Injuns, an' a wheen throwed in, if ye like."

"Look at the ground, Bill! It's all plain. Whar would we be after a volley? They'd have the advantage wi' their bows and lances. Wagh! they could spear us to pieces thar!"

"I didn't say we would take them on the prairay. We kin foller them till they're in the mountains, an' get them among the rocks. That's what I advise."

"Aye. They can't run away from us with that drove. That's sartain."

"They have no notion of running away. They will most likely attack us."

"That's jest what we want," said Garey. "We kin go yonder, and fight them till they've had a bellyful."

The trapper as he spoke, pointed to the foot of the Mimbræs, that lay about ten miles off to the eastward.

"May be they'll wait till more comes up. There's more of head chief's party than these; there were nearly four hundred when they passed the Pinon."

"Rube, where can the rest of them be?" demanded Seguin; "I can see down to the mine, and they are not upon the plain!"

"Aint a gwine to be, Cap. Some luck in that, I reckon. The ole fool has sent a party by tother trail. On the wrong scent—*them is.*"

"Why do you think they have gone by the other trail?"

"Why Cap., it stans for raizon. If they wur a coming ahint, some o' them niggurs on tother side wud a gone back afore this to hurry 'em up, do 'ee see? Thur haint gone ne'er a one, as I seed."

"You are right, Rube," replied Seguin, encouraged by the probability of what the other had asserted. "What do you advise us?" continued he, appealing to the old trapper, whose counsel he was in the habit of seeking in all cases of similar difficulty.

"Wal Cap., its a twistified piece o' business as it stans; an I haint figured it out to my satisfaction jest yet. If 'ee 'll gi' me a kuppel o' minutes, I'll answer ye to the best o' my possibilities."

"Very well; we will wait for you. Men! look to your arms, and see that they a: a all in readiness."

During this consultation, which had occupied but a few seconds of time, we could see that the enemy was similarly employed on the other side. They had drawn round their chief; and, from their gesticulations, it was plain they were deliberating how they should act.

Our appearance, with the children of their principal men as captives, had filled them with consternation at what they saw, and apprehensions of a fearful kind for what they saw not. Returning from a successful foray—laden with spoil, and big with the prospect of feasting and triumph—they suddenly perceived themselves outgeneralled at their own game. They knew we had been to their town. They conjectured that we had plundered and burnt their houses, and massacred their women and children. They fancied no less; for this was the very work in which they had themselves been engaged; and their judgment was drawn from their own conduct.

They saw moreover that we were a large party—able to defend what we had taken—at least against them—for they knew well that with their firearms the scalp-hunters were their overmatch—when there was any thing like an equality of numbers.

With these ideas then, it required deliberation on their part, as well as with us; and we knew that it could be some time before they would act. They too were in a dilemma.

The hunters obeyed the injunctions of Seguin, and remained silent, waiting upon Rube to deliver his advice.

The old trapper stood apart, half resting upon his rifle, which he clutched with both hands near the muzzle. He had taken out the "stopper," and was looking into the barrel, as if he were consulting some oracular spirit that he had kept bottled up within it. It was one of Rube's peculiar "ways," and those, who knew this, were seen to smile as they watched him.

After a few minutes spent in this silent entreaty, the oracle seemed to have sent forth its response; and Rube, returning the stopper to its place, came walking forward to the chief.

"Billee's right, Cap. If them Injuns must be fit—its got to be did whur thur's rocks or timmer. They'd whip us to shucks on the parairer. That's settled. Wal; thur's two things. They'll eyther come at us—if so be, yander's our ground"—here the speaker pointed to a spur of the Mimbres—"or we'll be-obleeged to foller them. If so be, we kin do it as easy as fallin off a log. They ain't over leg free."

"But how should we do for provisions in that case? We could never cross the desert without them."

"Why, Cap., thur's no difficulty bout that. Wi' the parairies as dry as they are, I kud stampede that hul cavayard as easy as a gang o' bufflers; and we'd come in for a share o' them, I reckon. 'Hur's a wuss thing than that this child smells."

"What?"

"I'm afeerd we mout fall in with Dacoma's niggurs on the back track; that's what I'm afeerd on."

"True—it is most probable."

"It are—unless they got overtuk in the kenyon; an I don't think it. They understand that erik too well."

The probability of Dacoma's band soon joining those of the head chief was apparent to all; and cast a shadow of despondency over every face. They were no doubt still in pursuit of us; and would soon arrive on the ground.

"Now, Cap.," continued the trapper, "I've gin ye my notion o' things, if so be we're boun to fight; but I has my behopes we kin get back the weemen 'ithout wastin our gunfodder."

"How? How?" eagerly inquired the chief and others.

"Why jest this away," replied the trapper, almost irritating me with the prolixity of his style. "Ee see them Injuns on tother side o' the gully?"

"Yes—yes," hastily replied Seguin.

"Wal; 'ee see these hyur?" and the speaker pointed to our captives.

"Yes—yes."

"Wal: 'ee see them over yander, though thur hides be a copery color has feelins for thur childer like white Christyuns. They eat 'em betimes—that's true; but thur's a releegas raizon for that, not many hyur understans, I reckon."

"And what would you have us do?"

"Why jest heist a bit o' a white rag an offer to swop pris'ners. They'll understand it, and come to farms, I'll be boun'. That putty leetle gal with the long har's head-chief's darter; an' the rest belongs to main men o' the tribe—I picked 'em for that. Besides thur's Dacoma an' the young queen. They'll bite thur nails off about *them*. 'Ee kin give up the chief, and trade them out o' the queen, best way ye kin."

"I will follow your advice," cried Seguin, his eye brightening with the anticipation of a happy result.

"Thur's no time to be wasted, then, Cap.; if Dacoma's men make thur appearance, all I've been a sayin' wont be worth the skin o' a sand-rat."

"Not a moment shall be lost," and Seguin gave orders to make ready the flag of peace.

"It 'ud be better, Cap., fust to gi' them a good sight o' what we've got. They haint seed Dacoma yet, nor the queen. Thur in the bushes."

"Right," answered Seguin. "Comrades! bring forward the captives to the edge of the barranca! Bring the Navajo chief! Bring the—my daughter!"

The men hurried to obey the command; and in a few minutes the captive children with Dacoma, and the mystery-queen, were led forward to the very brink of the chasm. The serapés, that had shrouded them, were removed; and they stood exposed in their usual costumes before the eyes of the Indians. Dacoma still wore his helmet; and the queen was conspicuous in the rich plume-embroidered tunic. They were at once recognised!

A cry of singular import burst from the Navajoes, as they beheld these new proofs of their discomfiture. The warriors unslung their lances, and thrust them into the earth with impotent indignation. Some of them drew scalps from their belts—stuck them on the points of their spears, and shook them at us over the brow of the abyss. They believed that Dacoma's band had been destroyed, as well as their women and children; and they threatened us with shouts and gestures.

In the midst of all this, we noticed a movement among the more staid warriors. A consultation was going on.

It ended. A party were seen to gallop toward the captive women, who had been left far back upon the plain.

"Great God!" cried I, struck with the horrid idea, "they are going to butcher them. Quick with the flag!"

But before the banner could be attached to its staff, the Mexican women were dismounted, their rebosos pulled off, and they were led forward to the precipice.

It was only meant for a counter-vaunt—the retaliation of a pang—for it was evident the savages knew, that among their captives were the wife and daughter of our chief. These were placed conspicuously in front, upon the very brow of the barranca!

CHAPTER XLIV

THE FLAG OF TRUCE

THEY might have spared themselves the pains. That agony was already felt; but, indeed, a scene followed that caused us to suffer afresh.

Up to this moment we had not been recognised by those near and dear to us. The distance had been too great for the naked eye; and our browned faces, and travel-stained habiliments were of themselves a disguise!

But the instincts of love are quick and keen, and the eyes of my betrothed were upon me. I saw her start forward. I heard the agonized scream. A pair of snow-white arms were extended, and she sank, fainting, upon the cliff!

At the same instant, Madame Seguin had recognised the chief, and called to him by name. Seguin shouted to her in reply, and cautioned her in tones of entreaty to remain patient and silent.

Several of the other females—all young and handsome—had recognised their lovers and brothers, and a scene followed that was painful to witness.

But my eyes were fixed upon *her*. I saw that she recovered from her swoon. I saw the savage, in hussar trappings, dismount; and, lifting her in his arms, carry her back upon the prairie.

I followed them with impotent gaze. I saw that he was paying her kind attentions; and I almost thanked him, though I knew it was but the selfish gallantry of the lover.

In a short while she rose to her feet again, and rushed back toward the barranca. I heard my name uttered across the

ravine. Hers was echoed back ; but at the moment both mother and daughter were surrounded by their guards, and carried back upon the prairie.

Meanwhile the white flag had been got ready, and Seguin, holding it aloft, stood out in front. We remained silent, watching with eager glances, for the answer.

There was a movement among the clustered Indians. We heard their voices in earnest talk ; and saw that something was going on in their midst.

Presently, a tall fine looking man came out from the crowd, holding an object in his left hand of a white colour. It was a bleached fawn-skin. In his right hand he carried a lance.

We saw him place the fawn-skin on the blade of his lance, and stand forward holding it aloft. Our signal of peace was answered.

“Silence, men!” cried Seguin, speaking to the hunters ; and then, raising his voice, he called aloud in the Indian language :

“Navajoes ! you know whom we are. We have passed through your country, and visited your head town. Our object was to search for our dear relatives that we knew were captives in your land. Some we have recovered ; but there are many others we could not find. That these might be restored to us in time, we have taken hostages, as you see. We might have brought away many more ; but these we considered were enough. We have not burned your town—we have not harmed your wives, your daughters, nor your children. With the exception of these, our prisoners, you will find all as you left them.”

A murmur ran through the ranks of the Indians. It was a murmur of satisfaction. They had been under a full belief that their town was destroyed and their women massacred ; and the words of Seguin, therefore, produced a singular effect. He could hear joyful exclamations and phrases interchanged among the warriors. Silence was again restored, and Seguin continued :—

“We see that you have been in *our* country. You have made captives, as well as we. You are red men. Red men can feel for their kindred as well as white men. We know this ; and for that reason have I raised the banner of peace, that each may restore to the other his own. It will please the Great Spirit, and will give satisfaction to both of us ; for that which you hold is of most value to us, and that which we have is dear only to you. Navajoes ! I have spoken. I await your answer.”

When Seguin had ended, the warriors gathered around the head chief ; and we could see that an earnest debate was going on amongst them. It was plain there were dissenting voices ; but the debate was soon over ; and the head chief, stepping forward, gave some instructions to the man who held the flag. The latter in a loud voice replied to Seguin's speech as follows :

“White chief! you have spoken well, and your words have been weighed by our warriors. You ask nothing more than what is just and fair. It would please the Great Spirit and satisfy us to exchange our captives; but how can we tell that your words are true? You say that you have not burned our town, nor harmed our women and children. How can we know that this is true? Our town is far off—so are our women, if they be still alive. We cannot ask *them*. We have only your word. It is not enough.”

Seguin had already anticipated this difficulty, and had ordered one of our captives—an intelligent lad—to be brought forward.

The boy at this moment appeared by his side.

“Question *him!*” shouted he, pointing to the captive lad.

“And why may we not question our brother—the chief Dacoma? The lad is young. He may not understand us. The chief could assure us better.”

“Dacoma was not with us at the town. He knows not what was done there.”

“Let Dacoma answer that.”

“Brother!” replied Seguin, “you are wrongly suspicious, but you shall have his answer,” and he addressed some words to the Navajo chief, who sat near him upon the ground.

The question was then put directly to Dacoma by the speaker on the other side. The proud Indian—who seemed exasperated with the humiliating situation in which he was placed—with an angry wave of his hand, and a short ejaculation, answered in the negative.

“Now, brother,” proceeded Seguin, “you see I have spoken true. Ask the lad what you first proposed.”

The boy was then interrogated as to whether we had burnt the town, or harmed the women and children. To these two questions, he also returned a negative answer.

“Well, brother,” said Seguin, “are you satisfied?”

For a long time there was no reply. The warriors were again gathered in council, and gesticulating with earnestness and energy. We could see that there was a party opposed to pacific measures, who were evidently counselling the others to try the fortune of a battle. These were the younger braves; and I observed that he in the hussar costume—who, as Rube informed us, was the son of the head chief—appeared to be the leader of this party.

Had not the head chief been so deeply interested in the result, the counsels of these might have carried; for the warriors well knew the scorn that would await them among neighboring tribes should they return without captives. Besides, there were numbers who felt another sort of interest in detaining them. They had looked upon the daughters of the Del Norté, and “saw that they were fair.”

But the counsels of the older men at length prevailed, and the spokesman replied:—

“The Navajo warriors have considered what they have heard. They believe that the white chief has spoken the truth; and they agree to exchange their prisoners. That this may be done in a proper and becoming manner, they propose—that twenty warriors be chosen on each side—that these warriors shall lay down their arms on the prairie in presence of all—that they shall then conduct their captives to the crossing of the barranca by the mine, and there settle the terms of their exchange—that all the others on both sides shall remain where they now are, until the unarmed warriors have got back with the exchanged prisoners—that the white banners shall then be struck, and both sides be free from the treaty. These are the words of the Navajo warriors.”

It was some time before Seguin could reply to this proposal. It seemed fair enough, but yet there was a *manner* about it, that led us to suspect some design; and we paused a moment to consider it. The concluding terms intimated an intention on the part of the enemy of making an attempt to retake their captives; but we cared little for this, provided we could once get them on our side of the barranca.

It was very proper that the prisoners should be conducted to the place of exchange by *unarmed* men, and twenty was a proper number; but Seguin knew well how the Navajoes would interpret the word “unarmed,” and several of the hunters were cautioned in an under tone to “stray” into the bushes, and conceal their knives and pistols under the flaps of their hunting shirts! We thought that we observed a similar manœuvre going on upon the opposite bank, with the tomahawks of our adversaries!

We could make but little objection to the terms proposed; and as Seguin knew that time saved was an important object, he hastened to accept them.

As soon as this was announced to the Navajoes, twenty men—already chosen no doubt—stepped out into the open prairie; and striking their lances into the ground, rested against them their bows, quivers, and shields. We saw no tomahawks; and we knew that every Navajo carries this weapon. They had all the means of concealing them about their persons—for most of them were dressed in the garb of civilised life, in the plundered habiliments of the Ranche and the Hacienda. We cared little, as we too were sufficiently armed. We saw that the party selected were men of powerful strength. In fact they were the picked warriors of the tribe.

Ours were similarly chosen. Among them were El Sol and Garey, Rube, and the bull-fighter Sanchez. Seguin and I were of the number. Most of the trappers, with a few Delaware Indians, completed the complement. The twenty were soon

selected; and stepping out on the open ground, as the Navajoes had done, we piled our rifles in the presence of the enemy.

Our captives were then mounted, and made ready for starting. The Queen and the Mexican girls were brought forward among the rest.

This last was a piece of strategy on the part of Seguin. He knew that we had captives enough to exchange one for one, without these; but he saw, as so did we all, that to leave the Queen behind would interrupt the negotiation, and perhaps put an end to it altogether. He had resolved, therefore, on taking her along; trusting that on the ground he could better negotiate for her. Failing this, there would be but one appeal—to arms—and he knew that our party was well prepared for that alternative.

Both sides were at length ready; and at a signal commenced riding down the barranca, in the direction of the mine. The rest of the two bands remained eyeing each other across the gulf, with glances of mistrust and hatred. Neither party could move without the other seeing it; for the plains in which they were—though on opposite sides of the barranca—were but segments of the same horizontal plateau. A horseman, proceeding from either party, could have been seen by the others, to a distance of many miles.

The flags of truce were still waving—their spears struck in the ground; but each of the hostile bands held their horses saddled and bridled, ready to mount at the first movement of the other.

CHAPTER XLV.

A VEXED TREATY.

WITHIN the barranca was the mine. The shafts—rude diggings—pierced the cliffs on both sides, like so many caves. The bottom between was bisected by a rivulet that muttered among loose rocks.

On the banks of this rivulet stood the old smelting houses and ruined ranches of the miners. Most of them were roofless, and crumbling to decay. The ground about them was shaggy and choked up. There were briars, mezcal plants, and cacti—all luxuriant, hirsute, and thorny.

Approaching this point, the road on each side of the barranca suddenly dips, both trails converging downward, and meeting among the ruins.

When in view of these, both parties halted, and signalled each other across the ravine. After a short parley, it was proposed by the Navajoes that the captives and horses should remain on the top of the hill—each train to be guarded by two men. The rest—eighteen on each side—would descend to the bottom of the barranca; meet among the houses; and, having smoked the calumet, arrange the terms of the exchange.

Neither Seguin nor I liked this proposal. We saw that in the event of a rupture in the negotiation—a thing we more than half anticipated—even should our party overpower the other, we could gain nothing. Before we could reach the Navajo captives, up the steep hill, the two guards would hurry them off; or—we dreaded to think of it—butcher them on the ground! It was a fearful thought, but there was nothing improbable in it,

We knew, moreover, that smoking the peace-pipe would be another waste of time; and we were on thorns about the approach of Dacoma's party.

But the proposal had come from the enemy, and they were obstinate. We could urge no objections to it without betraying *our* designs; and we were compelled—though loth—to accept it.

We dismounted, leaving our horses in charge of the guard, and, descending into the ravine, stood face to face with the warriors of Navajo!

They were eighteen picked men—tall, broad-shouldered, and muscular. The expression of their faces was savage, subtle, and grim. There was not a smile to be seen; and the lip, that at that moment had betrayed one, would have lied. There was hate in their hearts, and vengeance in their looks.

For a moment both parties stood scanning each other in silence. These were no common foes. It was no common hostility that for years had nerved them against each other; and it was no common cause that had, now for the first time, brought them face to face without arms in their hands. A mutual want had forced them to their present attitude of peace—though it was more like a truce between a lion and tiger which have met in an avenue of the jungly forest, and stand eyeing one another.

Though by agreement without arms, both were sufficiently armed, and they *knew* that of each other.

The handles of tomahawks, the hafts of knives, and the shining butts of pistols peeped carelessly out from the dresses both of hunters and Indians. There was little effort made to conceal these dangerous toys, and they were on all sides visible.

At length our mutual reconnoissance came to a period; and we proceeded to business.

There happened to be no breadth of ground, clear of weeds and thorny rubbish, where we could seat ourselves for the "smoke." Seguin pointed to one of the houses—an *adobe* structure, in a tolerable state of preservation—and several entered to examine it. The building had been used as a smelting-house, and broken trucks and other implements were lying over the floor. There was but one apartment—not a large one either—and near its centre stood a *brazero* covered with cold slag and ashes.

Two men were appointed to kindle a fire upon the brazero; and the rest, entering, took their seats upon the trucks and masses of quartz-rock ore that lay around the room.

As I was about seating myself, an object leaped against me from behind, uttering a low whine that ended in a bark. I turned, and beheld the dog Alp. The animal frenzied with delight rushed upon me repeatedly; and it was some time before I could quiet him, and take my place.

At length we were all seated upon opposite sides of the fire—each party forming the arc of a circle, concave to the other.

There was a heavy door still hanging upon its hinge ; and, as there were no windows in the house, this was suffered to remain open. It opened to the inside.

The fire was soon kindled, and the claystone calumet filled with "kini kinik." It was then lighted, and passed from mouth to mouth in profound silence.

We noticed that each of the Indians—contrary to their usual custom of taking only a whiff or two—smoked long and slowly. We knew it was a *ruse* to protract the ceremony, and gain time ; while we—I answer for Seguin and myself—were chafing at the delay.

When the pipe came round to the hunters, it passed in quicker time.

The unsocial smoke was at length ended ; and the negotiation began.

At the very commencement of the "talk" I saw that we were going to have a difficulty. The Navajoes—particularly the younger warriors—assumed a bullying and exactive attitude that the hunters were not likely to brook ; nor would they have submitted to it for a moment, but for the peculiar position in which their chief was placed. For his sake they held in, as well as they could ; but the tinder was apparent, and would not bear many sparks before it blazed up.

The first question was in relation to the number of the prisoners. The enemy had nineteen ; while we—without including the queen, or the Mexican girls—numbered twenty-one. This was in our favour, but to our surprise the Indians insisted that their captives were grown women, that most of ours were children, and that two of the latter should be exchanged for one of the former !

To this absurdity, Seguin replied that we could not agree to that ; but as he did not wish to keep any of their prisoners, he would exchange the twenty-one for the nineteen.

"Twenty-one !" exclaimed a brave, "why you have twenty-seven. We counted them on the bank."

"Six of those you counted are our own people. They are whites and Mexicans."

"Six whites !" retorted the savage, "there are but five. Who is the sixth ?"

"Perhaps it is our queen—*she* is light in color. Perhaps the pale chief has mistaken *her* for a white !"

"Ha—ha—ha—ha !" roared the savages in a taunting laugh.

"Our queen a white ! Ha ! ha ! ha !"

"Your queen," said Seguin, in a solemn voice, "your queen, as you call her, is *my daughter*."

"Ha ! ha ! ha !" again howled they in scornful chorus, "your daughter ! Ha ! ha ! ha !" and the room rang with their demoniac laughter.

"Yes!" repeated he in a loud but faltering voice, for he now saw the turn that things were taking. "Yes, she is my daughter."

"How can that be?" demanded one of the braves, an orator of the tribe.

"You have a daughter among our captives—we know that. She is white as the snow upon the mountain top. Her hair is yellow as the gold upon these armlets. The queen is dark in complexion; among our tribes there are many as light as she; and her hair is like the wing of the black vulture. How is that? *Our* children are like one another. Are not yours the same? If the queen be your daughter, then is not the gold-haired maiden. You cannot be the father of both. But no!" continued the subtle savage, elevating his voice, "the queen is not your daughter. She is of our race—a child of Moctezuma—a queen of the Navajoes!"

"The queen must be returned to us!" exclaimed several braves "she is ours—we must have her!"

In vain Seguin reiterated his paternal claim. In vain he detailed the time and circumstances of her capture by the Navajoes themselves. The braves again cried out,

"She is our queen—we must have her!"

Seguin, in an eloquent speech, appealed to the feelings of the old chief, whose daughter was in similar circumstances; but it was evident that the latter lacked the power, if he had the will to stay the storm that was rising. The younger warriors answered with shouts of derision—one of them crying out that "the white chief was raving."

They continued for some time to gesticulate, at intervals declaring loudly that on no terms would they agree to an exchange unless the queen were given up. It was evident that some mysterious tie bound them in such extreme loyalty. Even the exchange of Dacoma was less desired by them.

Their demands were urged in so insulting a manner, that we felt satisfied it was their intention, in the end, to bring us to a fight. The rifles, so much dreaded by them, were absent; and they felt certain of obtaining a victory over us.

The hunters were equally willing to be at it, and equally sure of a conquest.

They only waited the signal from their leader.

A signal was given; but, to their surprise and chagrin, it was one of peace!

Seguin, turning to them and looking down, for he was upon his feet, cautioned them in a low voice to be patient and silent. Then covering his eyes with his hand, he stood for some moments in an attitude of meditation.

The hunters had full confidence in the talents as well as bravery of their chief. They knew that he was devising some plan of action; and they patiently awaited the result.

On the other side, the Indians showed no signs of impatience. They cared not how much time was consumed ; for by this they hoped, that Dacoma's party would be on their trail. They sat still, exchanging their thoughts in grunts, and short phrases, while many of them filled up the intervals with laughter. They felt quite easy, and seemed not in the least to dread the alternative of a fight with us. Indeed, to look at both parties one should have said that man to man, we would be no match for them. They were all, with one or two exceptions, men of six feet, most of them over it, in height ; while many of the hunters were small-bodied men. But among these there was not one " white feather."

The Navajoes knew that they themselves were well armed for close conflict. They knew, too, that we were armed. Ha ! they little dreamt *how* we were armed. They saw that the hunters carried knives and pistols, but they thought that, after the first volley, uncertain and ill-directed, the knives would be no match for their terrible tomahawks. They knew not that from the belts of several of us, El Sol, Seguin, Garey and myself, hung a fearful weapon,—the most fearful of all others in close combat—the *Colt revolver*. It was then but a new patent ; and no Navajo had ever heard its continuous and death-dealing detonations.

" Brothers !" said Seguin, again placing himself in an attitude to speak, " you deny that I am the father of the girl. Two of your captives, whom you know to be my wife and daughter, are her mother and sister. This you also deny. If you be sincere, then, you cannot object to the proposal I am about to make. Let *them* be brought before us ; let *her* be brought. If she fail to recognise and acknowledge her kindred, then shall I yield my claim ; and the maiden will be free to return with the warriors of Navajo."

The hunters heard this proposition with surprise. They knew that Seguin's efforts to awaken any recollection of himself in the mind of the girl had been unsuccessful. What likelihood was there that she would remember her mother ? But Seguin himself had little hope of this ; and a moment's reflection convinced us that his proposal was based upon some ulterior design.

He saw that the exchange of the queen was a *sine qua non* with the Indians ; and without this being granted, the negotiations would terminate abruptly—leaving his wife and younger daughter still in the hands of our enemies. He reflected on the harsh lot which would await them in their captivity ; while *she* but returned to receive homage and kindness. *They* must be saved at every sacrifice ; *she* must be yielded up to redeem them.

But Seguin had still another design. It was a strategic manœuvre ; a desperate and *dernier resort* on his part. It was this. He saw that if we could once get the captives, his wife and daughter, down among the houses there would be a possibility, in the event of a fight, of carrying them off. The queen too might thus be rescued as well. It was the alternative suggested

In a hurried whisper he communicated this, to those of his comrades nearest him, in order to ensure their prudence and patience.

As soon as the proposal was made, the Navajoes rose from their seats, and clustered together in a corner of the room to deliberate. They spoke in low tones. We could not of course, understand what was said, but from the expression of their faces, and their gesticulations, we could tell that they seemed disposed to accept it. They knew that the queen had not recognised Seguin as her father. They had watched her closely, as she rode down the opposite side of the barranca; in fact, conversed with her, before we could interfere to prevent it, by signals. No doubt she had informed them of what happened at the canon with Dacoma's warriors, and the probability of their approach. They had little fear, then, that she would remember her mother. Her long absence; her age when made captive; her after life, and the more than kind treatment she had received at their hands; had long since blotted out every recollection of her childhood and its associations. The subtle savages well knew this; and at length, after a discussion which lasted for nearly an hour, they resumed their seats, and signified their assent to the proposal.

Two men, one from each party, were now sent for the three captives, and we sat waiting their arrival.

In a short time they were led in.

I find a difficulty in describing the scene that followed. The meeting of Seguin with his wife and daughter; my own short embrace and hurried kiss; the sobs and swooning of my betrothed; the mother's recognition of her long-lost child; the anguish that ensued as her yearning heart made its appeals *in vain*; the half indignant, half pitying looks of the hunters; the triumphant gestures and ejaculations of the Indians; all formed points in the picture that lives with painful vividness in my memory, though I am not sufficiently master of the author's art to paint it.

In a few minutes the captives were led out of the house, guarded by two men, while the rest of us remained to complete the negotiation.

CHAPTER XLVI.

A CONFLICT WITH CLOSED DOORS.

THE occurrence did not improve the temper of either party ; much less that of the hunters. The Indians were triumphant, but not a whit the less inclined to obstinacy and exaction. They now returned to their former offer. For those of our captives that were women-grown, they would exchange one for one, and for their chief Dacoma, they offered to give two. For the rest, they insisted on receiving two for one.

By this arrangement, we could ransom only about twelve of the Mexican women ; but, finding them determined, Seguin at length assented to these terms—provided they would allow us the privilege of choosing the twelve to be exchanged.

To our surprise and indignation this was refused !

We no longer doubted what was to be the winding up of the negotiation. The air was filled with the electricity of anger. Hate kindled hate ; and vengeance was burning in every eye.

The Indians scowled on us, glancing malignantly out of their oblique orbs. There was triumph too in their looks, for they believed themselves far stronger than we !

On the other side sat the hunters quivering under a *double* indignation. I say double. I can hardly explain what I mean. They had never before been so braved by the Indians. They had, all their lives, been accustomed—partly from bravado, and partly from actual experience—to consider the red men their inferiors in subtlety and courage ; and to be thus bearded by them, filled the hunters, as I have said, with a double indignation. It was like the bitter anger which the superior feels towards his resisting inferior—the lord to his rebellious serf—the master to his lashed slave, who has turned and struck him ! It was thus the hunters felt.

I glanced along their line. I never saw faces with such expressions, as I saw there and then. Their lips were white, and

drawn tightly over their teeth. Their cheeks were set and colourless; and their eyes portending forward, seemed glued in their sockets! There was no motion to be detected in the features of any, save the twitching of angry muscles. Their right hands were buried in the bosoms of their half-open shirts—each I knew, grasping a weapon—and they appeared not to sit but to crouch forward, like panthers quivering upon the spring!

There was a long interval of silence on both sides.

It was broken by a cry from without—the scream of the war-eagle!

We should not have noticed this—knowing that these birds were common in the Mimbres, and one might have flown over the ravine—but we thought, or fancied, that it had made an impression upon our adversaries. They were men not apt to show any sudden emotion; but it appeared to us that, all at once, their glances grew bolder and more triumphant. Could it have been a signal?

We listened for a moment. The scream was repeated; and although it was exactly after the manner of a bird well known to us—the white-headed eagle—we sat with unsatisfied and fearful apprehensions.

The young chief—he in the hussar dress—was upon his feet. He had been the most turbulent and exacting of our opponents. He was a man of most villainous and licentious character—so Rube had told us—but, nevertheless, holding great power among the braves. It was he who had spoken in refusal of Seguin's offer; and he was now about to assign his reasons. We knew them without that.

“Why,” said he looking at Seguin as he spoke, “why is it that the white chief is so desirous of choosing among our captives? Is it that he wishes to get back the yellow-haired maiden?”

He paused for a moment, as if for a reply; but Seguin made none.

“If the white chief believes our queen to be his daughter, would he not wish that her sister should be her companion, and return with her to our land?”

Again he paused; but, as before, Seguin remained silent.

The speaker proceeded.

“Why not let the yellow-haired maiden return with us, and become my wife? Who am I, that ask this? A chief of the Navajoes, the descendants of the great Moctezuma—the son of their king!”

The savage looked around him with a vaunting air, as he uttered these words.

“Who is she,” he continued, “that I am thus begging for a bride? The daughter of one who is not even respected among his own people! the daughter of a *culatta!*”

I looked at Seguin. I saw his form dilating. I saw the big veins swelling along his throat. I saw that wild expression, I had

once before noticed, gathering in his eyes. I knew that the crisis was near.

Again the eagle screamed!

“But no!” proceeded the savage, seeming to draw new boldness from the signal; “I will beg no more. I love the white maiden. She must be mine! and this very night she shall sleep——”

He never finished the sentence. Seguin’s bullet had sped, piercing the centre of his forehead. I caught a glimpse of the red round hole, with its circle of blue powder, as the victim fell forward on his face!

Altogether we sprang to our feet. As one man rose hunters and Indians. As if from one throat pealed the double shout of defiance; and, as if by one hand, knives, pistols and tomahawks, were drawn together. The next moment we closed and battled!

Oh! it was a fearful strife, as the pistols cracked, the long knives glittered, and the tomahawks swept the air—a fearful, fearful strife!

You would suppose that the first shock should have prostrated both ranks. It was not so. The early blows of a struggle like this are wild and well parried; and human life is hard to take. What were the lives of men like these?

A few fell. Some recoiled from the collision, wounded and bleeding, but still to battle again. Some fought hand to hand; while several pairs had clutched, and were striving to fling each other in the desperate wrestle of death!

Some rushed for the door intending to fight outside. A few got out; but the crowd pressed against it—the door closed—dead bodies fell behind it—we fought in darkness!

We had light enough for our purpose. The pistols flashed at quick intervals, displaying the horrid picture. The light gleamed upon fiend-like faces, upon red and waving weapons, upon prostrate forms of men, upon others struggling in every attitude of deadly conflict!

The yells of the Indians, and the not less savage shouts of their white foemen, had continued from the first; but the voices grew hoarser, and the shouts were changed to groans, and oaths, and short earnest exclamations. At intervals were heard the quick percussions of blows, and the dull sodden sound of falling bodies!

The room became filled with smoke and dust and choking sulphur; and the combatants were half stifled as they fought!

At the first break of the battle I had drawn my revolver, and fired it in the faces of the closing foemen. I had fired shot after shot—some at random, others directed upon a victim. I had not counted the reports until the cock “checking” on the steel nipple, told me I had gone the round of the six chambers.

This had occupied but as many seconds of time. Mechanically I stuck the empty weapon behind my belt; and, guided by an

impulse, made for the door. Before I could reach it it was closed ; and I saw that to get out was impossible !

I turned to search for an antagonist. I was not long in finding one. By the flash of a pistol I saw one of the Indians rushing upon me with upraised hatchet. Up to this time something had hindered me from drawing my knife. It was now too late ; and holding out my arms to catch the blow, I ducked my head towards the savage.

I felt the keen blade cutting the flesh as it glanced along my shoulder. I was but slightly wounded. He had missed his aim from my stooping so suddenly ; but the impetus brought our bodies together, and the next moment we grappled !

We stumbled over a heap of rock, and, for some moments, struggled together upon the ground—neither able to use his weapon. Again we rose, still locked in the angry embrace—again we were falling with terrible force. Something caught us in our descent. It shook. It gave way with a crashing sound ; and we fell headlong into the broad and brilliant light !

I was dazzled and blinded. I heard behind me a strange rumbling like the noise made by falling timbers ! But I heeded not that. I was too busy to speculate upon causes.

The sudden shock had separated us ; and both rose at the same instant—again to grapple, and again to come together to the earth. We twisted and wriggled over the ground, among the weeds and thorny cacti. I was every moment growing weaker, while the sinewy savage—used to such combats—seemed to be gaining fresh nerve and breath. Thrice he had thrown me under ; but each time I had clutched his right arm and prevented the descending blow. I had succeeded in drawing my knife as we fell through the wall ; but my arm was also held fast, and I was unable to use it.

As we came to the ground for the fourth time, my antagonist fell under me. A cry of agony passed from his lips, his head “coggled” over among the weeds, and he lay in my arms without struggling !

I felt his grasp gradually relaxing. I looked in his face. His eyes were glassy and torted. Blood was gurgling through his teeth. I saw that he was dead !

To my astonishment I saw this, for I knew I had not struck him as yet. I was just drawing my arm from under him to do so, when I noticed that he ceased to resist. But the knife now caught my eye. It was red—blade and haft—and so was the hand that clasped it !

As we fell I had held it, accidentally, point upward. My antagonist had *fallen upon the blade !*

I now thought of my betrothed, and, untwining myself from the lithe and nerveless limbs of the savage, I rose to my feet. The ranche was in flames !

The roof had fallen in upon the brazero ; and the dry shingles

had caught the blaze. Men were crawling out from the burning ruin ; but not to run away. No ! under its licking flames, amidst the hot smoke, they still battled—fierce, and foaming, and frenzied !

I did not stay to recognise who they were—these tireless combatants. I ran forward, looking on all sides for the objects of my solicitude. The wave of female dresses caught my eye, far up the cliff, on the road leading to the Navajo captives. O God ! it was they. The three were climbing the steep path, each urged onward by a savage.

My first impulse was to rush after ; but at that moment, fifty horsemen made their appearance upon the hill ; and came galloping downward.

I saw the madness of attempting to follow them ; and turned to retreat toward the other side, where we had left our captives and horses. As I ran across the bottom, shots rang in my ear, proceeding from our side of the barranca. Looking up, I descried the mounted hunters coming down at a gallop, pursued by a cloud of savage horsemen. It was the band of Dacoma !

Uncertain what to do, I stood for a moment where I was, and watched the pursuit.

The hunters, on reaching the ranches, did not halt, but galloped on down the valley, firing as they went. A body of Indians kept on after them ; while another body pulled up, clustered around the blazing ruin, and commenced searching among the walls.

I was yet screened in the thicket of cacti ; but I saw that my hiding-place would soon be pierced by the eyes of the subtle savages ; and, dropping upon my hands and knees, I crept towards the cliff. On reaching it, I found myself close to the mouth of the cave—a small shaft of the mine—and into this I at once betook myself.

CHAPTER XLVII.

A QUEER ENCOUNTER IN A CAVE.

THE place into which I crawled was of irregular outlines. Rocks jutted along the sides: and between these, small lateral shafts had been dug—where the miners had followed the ramifications of the “quixa.” The cave was not a deep one. The vein had not proved profitable; and had been abandoned for some other.

I kept up it, until I was fairly “in the dark!” and then groping against one side, I found a recess, in which I ensconced myself. By peeping round the rock, I could see out of the cave, and some distance over the bottom of the barranca—where the bushes grew thin and straggling.

I had hardly seated myself, when my attention was called to a scene that was passing outside. Two men on their hands and knees were crawling through the cactus plants before the mouth of the cave. Beyond them half-a-dozen savages on horseback were beating the thicket; but had not yet seen the men. These I recognised easily. They were Godé and the Doctor. The latter was nearer me; and as he scrambled on over the shingle, something started out of the rocks within reach of his hand. I noticed that it was a small animal of the armadilla kind. I saw him stretch forward—clutch it—and, with a pleased look, deposit it in a bag that was by his side. All this time the Indians were whooping and yelling behind him, and not fifty yards distant.

Doubtless the animal was some new species; but the zealous naturalist never gave it to the world. He had scarcely drawn forth his hand again, when a cry from the savages anno unced

that he and Godé were discovered; and the next moment, both lay upon the ground pierced with lances, and to all appearance dead!

Their pursuers now dismounted with the intention of scalping them. Poor Reichter! his cap was pulled off—the bleeding trophy followed—and he lay with the red skull toward the cave—a hideous spectacle!

Another Indian had alighted, and stood over the Canadian with his long knife in his hand. Although pitying my poor follower—and altogether in no humour for mirth—knowing what I did, I could not help watching the proceedings with some curiosity.

The savage stood for a moment, admiring the beautiful curls that embellished the head of his victim. He was no doubt thinking what handsome fringes they would make for his leggings. He appeared to be in ecstasies of delight; and from the flourishes which he made with his knife, I could see that it was his intention to *skin the whole head!*

After cutting several capers around it, he stooped and grasped a fistful of the curls; but before he had touched the scalp with his blade, the hair lifted off, displaying the white and marble-like skull!

With a cry of terror, the savage dropped the wig; and running backward, fell over the body of the doctor. The cry attracted his comrades, and several of them dismounting, approached the strange object with looks of astonishment. One, more courageous than the rest, picked up the wig, which they all proceeded to examine with curious minuteness.

Then one after another went up to the shining skull, and passed their fingers over its smooth surface, all the while uttering exclamations of surprise. They tried on the wig, and took it off, and put it on again, turning it in various ways. At length, he who claimed it as his property, pulled off his plumed head-dress; and adjusting the wig upon his own head—front backwards—stalked proudly around—with the long curls dangling over his face!

It was altogether a curious scene, and, under other circumstances, might have amused me. There was something irresistibly comic in the puzzled looks of the actors; but I had been too deeply affected by the tragedy to laugh at the farce. There was too much of horror around me. Seguin perhaps dead. *She* gone for ever—the slave of the brutal savage. My own peril, too, at the moment—for I knew not how soon I might be discovered, and dragged forth. This affected me least of all. My life was now of little value to me; and so I regarded it.

But there is an *instinct*—so called—of self-preservation, even when the will ceases to act. Hopes soon began to shape themselves in my mind, and along with these the *wish* to live. Thoughts came. I might organise a powerful band. I might rescue her. Yes! even though years might intervene, I would accomplish this. *She* would still be true! *She would never forget!*

Poor Seguin what a life of hope withered in an hour—he himself sealing the sacrifice with his blood!

But I would not despair—even with his fate for a warring. I would take up the drama where he had ended. The curtain should rise upon new scenes, and I would not abandon the stage until I had accomplished a more joyous finale—or, failing this, had reached the dénouement of death or vengeance!

Poor Seguin! No wonder, he had been a scalp-hunter. I could now understand how holy was his hate for the ruthless red-man. I, too, had imbibed the passion!

With such reflections passing hastily—for the scene I have described, and the sequent thoughts, did not occupy much time—I turned my eyes inward, to examine whether I was sufficiently concealed in my niche. They might take it into their heads to *search the shaft!*

As I endeavoured to penetrate the gloom that extended inward, my gaze became riveted on an object, that caused me to shrink back with a cold shudder. Notwithstanding the scenes I had just passed through, this was the cue for still another agony.

In the thick of the darkness I could distinguish two small spots, round and shining. They did not scintillate, but rather glistened with a steady greenish lustre. I knew that *they were eyes!*

I was in the cave with a panther; or a still more terrible companion, the grizzly bear!

My first impulse was to press back into the recess, where I had hidden myself. This I did until my back leaned against the rocks. I had no thoughts of attempting to escape out. That would have been from the frying-pan into the fire—for the Indians were still in front of the cave. Moreover any attempt to retreat would only draw on the animal—perhaps at that moment straining to spring!

I cowered closely—groping along my belt for the handle of my knife. I clasped this at length; and drawing it forth, waited in a crouching attitude.

During all this time, my eyes had remained fixed on the lustrous orbs before me.

I saw that *they* were fixed upon mine; and watched me without as much as winking!

Mine seemed to be possessed of abstract volition. *I could not take them off!* They were held by some terrible fascination; and I felt, or fancied, that the moment this should be broken, the animal would spring upon me!

I had heard of fierce brutes being conquered by the glance of the human eye; and I endeavoured to look back my *vis-a-vis* with interest.

We sat for some time—neither of us moving an inch. I could see nothing of the animal's body—nothing but the green gleaming circles that seemed set in a ground of ebony.

As they had remained motionless so long, I conjectured that the owner of them was still lying in his lair; and would not make his attack, until something disturbed him—perhaps until the Indians had gone away.

The thought now occurred to me that I might better arm myself. I knew that a knife would be of little avail against a grizzly bear. My pistol was still in my belt, but it was empty. Would the animal permit me to load it? I resolved to make the attempt.

Still leaving my eyes to fulfil their office, I felt for my flask and pistol! and, finding both ready, I commenced loading. I proceeded with silence and caution, for I knew that these animals could see in the dark; and that in this respect my *vis-a-vis* had the advantage of me. *I felt the powder in* with my finger; and, pushing the ball on top of it, rolled the cylinder to the right notch, and cocked.

As the spring “clicked” I saw the eyes start. “It will be on me now!”

Quick as the thought, I placed my finger to the trigger; but before I could level, a voice, with a well known accent restrained me.

“Hold on thur, d—n yur!” cried the voice; “why the d—t—n didn’t ee say yur hide wur white? I thought ’twur some sneaking Injun. Who the h—l are ’ee, anyhow? ’Taint Bill Garey? No Billee; ’taint you, old fellur.”

“No,” said I, recovering from my surprise. “It’s not Bill.”

“I mout a guessed that. Bill wud a know’d me sooner. He wud a know’d the glint o’ this niggur’s eyes, as I wud hisn. Ah! poor Billee! Ise afeerd that trapper’s rubbed out: an’ thur aint many more o’ his sort in the mountains. No, that thur aint.”

“D—t—n!” continued the voice with a fierce emphasis. “This comes o’ layin one’s rife ahint them. Ef I’d a had Targuts wi’ me, I wudn’t a been hidin hyur like a scared possum. But she are gone—that leetle gun are gone—and the mar too. and hyur I am ’ithout eyther beast or weepun. D—t—n!”

And the last word was uttered with an angry hiss, that echoed through every part of the cave.

“Yur the young fellur—the Capt’n’s friend, aint ’ee?” inquired the speaker, with a sudden change of tone.

“Yes,” I replied.

“I didn’t see yur a comin in, or I mout a spoke sooner. I’ve got a smart lick across the arm, and I wur jest a tyin it up as ye tumbled in thur. Who did ’ee think this child wur?”

“I did not think you were any one. I took you for a grizzly bear.”

“Ha! ha! ha! He! he! he! I thort so, when I heerd the clock o’ yur pistol. He—he—he! If ever I sets my peepers on Bill Garey agin, I’ll make that niggur larf till his gut aches. Ole Rube tuk for a grizzly! If that aint—Ha—ha—ha! He—he—he! Ho—ho—hoo!”

And the old trapper chuckled at the conceit, as if he had just been witnessing some scene of amusement, and there was not an enemy within a hundred miles of him!

"Did you see any thing of Seguin?" I asked, wishing to learn whether there was any probability that my friend still lived.

"Did I? I did; an' a sight that wur. Did 'ee iver see a cat-amount riz?"

"I believe I have," said I.

"Wal—that wur him. He wur in the shanty, when it felled. So wur I m'self; but I wa'nt thur long arter. I creeped out some'rs about the door; and jest then I seed the Cap., hand to hand wi' an Injun in a stan-up tussle; but it didn't last long. The Cap. gin him a sockdolloger some'rs about the ribs; and the niggur went under—he did."

"But what of Seguin? Did you see him afterwards?"

"Did I see him afterwards? No. I didn't."

"I fear he is killed."

"That aint likely, young fellur. He knows these diggins better'n any o' us; and he oughter know whur to caché, I reckon. He's did that, I'll be boun'."

"Aye, if he would," said I, thinking that Seguin might have followed the captives, and spent his life recklessly.

"Don't be skeert about him, young fellur. The Cap. aint a gwine to put his fist into a bee's nest, whur thur's no honey—he aint."

"But where could he have gone, when you did not see him afterwards?"

"Whur could he a gone? Fifty ways he kud a gone—through the brush. I did'nt think o' lookin arter him. He left the Injun whur he had throw'd him, 'ithout raisin the har. So I stooped down to git it; and when I riz agin, he wa'nt thur nohow. But *that* Injun wur. Lor'! that Injun are some punkins—he are."

"What Indian do you mean?"

"Him as jined us on the Del Nort—the Coco."

"El Sol! what of him? is he killed?"

"Wal he aint, I reckon; nor can't a be; that's this child's openyun o' it. He kim from under the ranche, arter it whammed; an his fine dress looked as spick, as ef it had been jest tuk out-o' a bandy-box. Thur wur two at him, an Lor'! how he fit them! I tackled on to one o' them ahint, an gin *him* a settler in the hump ribs; but the way *he* finished the other wur a caution to Crockett. 'Twur the puttiest lick I ever seed in these hyur mountains; and I've seed a good when, I reckon."

"How was it?"

"'Ee know the Injun—that are the Coco--fit wi' a hatchet?"

"Yes."

“Wal then; that ur’s a desprit weepun, for them as knows how to use it; *he* diz—that Injun diz. ’Tother had a hatchet too, but *he* didn’t keep it long. ’Twur clinked out o’ his hands in a minit; an then the Coco got a down blow at him. Wah! it *wur* a down blow, an it want nuthin else. It split the niggur’s head clur down to the thrapple. ’Twur sep’rated into two halves as ef ’t had been clove wi’ a broad-axe! Ef ’ee had a seed the varmint when he kim to the ground, ’ee’d a thort he wur double-headed. Jest then I spied the Injuns a comin down both sides o’ the bluff; an’ havin neyther beast nor weepun’—ceptin a knife—this child tuk a notin. *he* want *ee* to be thur any longer, and cachéd—*he* did.”

CHAPTER XLVIII.

SMOKED OUT.

OUR conversation had been carried on in a low tone, for the Indians still remained in front of the cave. Many others had arrived, and were examining the skull of the Canadian, with the same looks of curiosity and wonderment that had been exhibited by their comrades.

Rube and I sat for some time in silence, watching them. The trapper had flitted nearer me, so that he could see out, and talk in whispers.

I was still apprehensive that the savages might search the cave.

"'Taint likely," said my companion. "They mout ef thur hadn't a been so many o' these diggins, do'ee see? Thur's a grist o' em, more'n a hundred, on tother side; an most o' the men who got clur tuk furrer down. It's my notion the Injuns seed that, an wont disturb———*Gee—zus! ef thur aint that d—t—n dog!*"

I well understood the meaning of the fearful emphasis, with which these last words were repeated. My eyes, simultaneously with those of the speaker had fallen upon the dog Alp. He was running about in front of the cave. I saw at a glance he was searching for *me!*

The next moment he had struck the trail, where I had crawled through the cacti, and came running down in the direction of the cave!

On reaching the body of the Canadian, which lay directly in his track, he stopped for a moment, and appeared to examine

it. Then, uttering a short yelp, he passed on to that of the doctor, where he made a similar demonstration. He ran several times from one to the other; but at length left them; and, with his nose once more to the ground, disappeared out of our view.

His odd actions had attracted the attention of the savages, who, one and all, stood watching him!

My companion and I were beginning to hope that he had lost me; when, to our dismay, he appeared a second time coming down the trail, as before. This time, he leaped over the bodies; and, the next moment, sprang into the mouth of the cave!

A yell from without told us that we were lost.

We endeavoured to drive the dog out again, and succeeded; Rube having wounded him with his knife; but the wound itself, and the behaviour of the animal outside, convinced our enemies that some one was within the shaft.

In a few seconds the entrance was darkened by a crowd of savages, shouting and yelling.

"Now, show yur shootin', young fellur," said my companion. "It's the new kind o' pistol 'ee hev got. Load every ber'l of it."

"Shall I have time to load them?"

"Plenty o' time. They aint a gwine to come in without a light. Thur gone for a torch to the shanty. Quick wi yur! Slap in the fodder!"

Without waiting to reply, I caught hold of my flask, and loaded the remaining five chambers of the revolver. I had scarcely finished, when one of the Indians appeared in front with a flaming brand; and was about stooping into the mouth of the cavern.

"Now's yur time," cried Rube. "Fetch the d—d niggur out o' his boots!—fetch him!"

I fired, and the savage, dropping the torch, fell dead upon the top of it.

An angry yell from without followed the report; and the Indians disappeared from the front. Shortly after, an arm was seen reaching in; and the dead body was drawn back out of the entrance!

"What will they do next, think you?" I inquired of my companion.

"I can't tell adzactly yit; but thur sick o' that game, I reckon. Load that ber'l again. I guess we'll git a when o' 'em afore we gins in. D—t—n! that gun, Targuts. Ef I only had that lectle piece hyur. 'Ee've got six shots, have 'ee? Good. 'Ee mout choek up the cave wi' their karkidges afore they kin reach us. It are a great weepun, an' no mistakes. I seed the Cap. use it. Lor! how he made it tell on them niggurs i' the shanty. Thur aint many 'o *them* about, I reckon. Load sure, young fellur! Thur's plenty o' time. They knows what you've got thur."

During all this dialogue, none of the Indians made their appearance; but we could hear them on both sides of the shaft, without. We knew they were deliberating on what plan they would take to get at us.

As Rube suggested, they seemed to be aware that the shot had come from a revolver. Doubtless some of the survivors of the late fight had informed them of the fearful havoc that had been made among them with our pistols; and they dreaded to face them. What other plan would they adopt? Starve us out?

"They mout," said Rube, in answer to my question, "an' kin if they try. Thur aint a big show o' vittlin hyur—'ceptin we chaw donicks. But thur's another way, ef they only hev the gumshin to go about it, that'll git us sooner than starvin—H—ll!" ejaculated the speaker, with emphasis. "I thort so. Thur a gwine to smoke us. Lookee, yander!"

I looked forth. At a distance I saw several Indians coming in the direction of the cave, carrying large bundles of brushwood. Their intention was evident.

"But *can* they do this?" I inquired, doubting the possibility of our enemies being able to effect their purpose in that way; "can we not bear the smoke?"

"Bar it! Yur green, young fellur Do'ee know what sort o' d—d brush thur a toating yander?"

"No," said I, "what is it?"

"It are the stink-plant then; an' the stinkinest plant 'ee ever smelt, I reckon. The smoke o' it ud choke a skunk out o a persimmon log. I tell 'ee, young'un, we'll eyther be smoked out, or smothered where we are; an' this child haint fit Injun, for thirty yeern or better, to go under thataway. When it gits to its wust, I'm a gwine to make a rush. That's what *I'm* a gwine ter do, young fellur."

"But how?" I asked hurriedly, "how shall we act then?"

"How? Yur game to the toes, aint 'ee?"

"I am willing to fight to the last."

"Wal then, hyur's how, an' the only how. When they've raised the snoke, so that they can't see us a comin, we'll strcak it out among 'em. You hev the pistol, and kin go fo'most. Shoot every d—d niggur that clutches at ye, an run like h—ll. I'll foller clost on your heels. If we kin oncest git through the thick o' em, we mout make the brush, and creep under it to the big caves on tother side. Them caves jines one another; and we mout dodge them thur. I seed the time this coon kud a run a bit; but these hyur joints aint as soople as they wur oncest. We kin try neverthemless; and mind, young fellur; it's our only chance, do'ee hear?"

I promised to follow the directions, that my never-despairing companion had given me.

"They wont get ole Rube's scalp yit—*they* won't.—He! he! he!"

I turned toward him. The man was actually laughing at this wild and strange-timed jest! It was awful to hear him.

Several armfuls of brush were now thrown into the mouth of the cave. I saw that it was the filthy creosote plant—the *ideodondo*.

It was thrown upon the still blazing torch, and soon caught—sending up a thick black smoke. More was piled on, and the fetid vapour—impelled by some influence from without—began to reach our nostrils and lungs, causing an almost instantaneous feeling of sickness and suffocation. I could not have borne it long. I did not stay to try how long—for at that moment I heard Rube crying out:—

“Now’s yur time, young fellur! Out, and gi’ them h—ll!”

With a feeling of desperate resolve, I clutched my pistol, and dashed through the smoking brushwood. I heard a wild and deafening shout. I saw a crowd of men—of fiends. I saw spears, and tomahawks, and red knives, raised, and—

CHAPTER XLIX.

A NOVEL MODE OF EQUITATION.

WHEN consciousness returned, I found that I was lying on the ground, and my dog—the innocent cause of my captivity—was licking my face. I could not have been long senseless; for the savages were still gesticulating violently around me. One was waving them back. I recognised him. It was Dacoma!

The chief uttered a short harangue that seemed to quiet the warriors. I could not tell what he said, but I heard him use frequently, the word Quetzalcoatl. I knew that this was the name of their god; but I did not understand, at the time, what the saving of my life could have to do with him.

I thought that Dacoma was protecting me, from some feeling of pity or gratitude; and I endeavoured to recollect whether I had shown him any special act of kindness during his captivity. I had sadly mistaken the motives of that splendid savage.

My head felt sore. Had they scalped me? With the thought, I raised my hand, passing it over my crown. No. My favourite brown curls were still there; but there was a deep cut along the back of my head—the dent of a tomahawk. I had been struck from behind, as I came out, and before I could fire a single bullet!

Where was Rube? I raised myself a little, and looked around. He was not to be seen anywhere!

Had he escaped, as he intended? No; it would have been impossible for any man, with only a knife, to have fought his way through so many. Moreover, I did not observe any commotion among the savages, as if an enemy had escaped them.

None seemed to have gone off from the spot. What then had—? Ha! I now understood, in its proper sense, Rube's jest about his scalp. It was not a *double entendre*, but a *mot* of triple ambiguity.

The trapper, instead of following me, had remained quietly in his den; where, no doubt, he was at that moment watching me—his scape-goat—and chuckling at his own escape!

The Indians, never dreaming that there were two of us in the cave, and satisfied that it was now empty, made no farther attempts to "smoke" it.

I was not likely to undeceive them. I knew that Rube's death or capture could not have benefited me; but I could not help reflecting on the strange stratagem by which the old fox had saved himself.

I was not allowed much time for reflection. Two of the savages, seizing me by the arms, dragged me up to the still blazing ruin. O God! was it for this Dacoma had saved me from their tomahawks? for this, the most cruel of deaths!

They proceeded to tie me hand and foot. Several others were around, submitting to the same treatment. I recognized Sanchez the bull-fighter, and the red-haired Irishman. There were three others of the band whose names I had never learnt.

We were in an open space—in front of the burning ranche. We could see all that was going on.

The Indians were clearing it of the fallen and charred timbers, to get at the bodies of their friends. I watched their proceedings with less interest, as I now knew that Seguin was not there.

It was a horrid spectacle when the rubbish was cleared away, laying bare the floor of the ruin. More than a dozen bodies lay upon it—half baked, half roasted! Their dresses were burned off; but by the parts that remained still intact from the fire, we could easily recognize to what party each had belonged. The greater number of them were Navajoes. There were also the bodies of hunters smoking inside their cindery shirts. I thought of Garey; but, as far as I could judge, he was not among them.

There were no scalps for the Indians to take. The fire had been before them, and had left not a hair upon the heads of their dead foemen!

Seemingly mortified at this, they lifted the bodies of the hunters, and tossed them once more into the flames, that were still blazing up from the piled rafters. They gathered the knives, pistols, and tomahawks that lay among the ashes; and, carrying what remained of their own people out of the ruin, placed them in front. They then stood around them in a circle; and with loud voices, chaunted a chorus of vengeance!

During all this, we lay where we had been thrown, guarded by a dozen savages. We were filled with fearful apprehensions. We saw the fire still blazing, and we saw that the half-burnt

bodies of our late comrades had been thrown upon it. We dreaded a similar fate for our own!

But we soon found that we were reserved for some other purpose. Six mules were brought up, and upon these we were mounted in a novel fashion. We first set astride on the bare backs, with our faces turned tailwards. Our feet were then drawn under the necks of the animals, where our ankles were closely corded together. We were next compelled to bend down our bodies, until we *lay along the backs* of the mules—our chins resting on their rumps. In this position our arms were drawn down, until our hands met underneath, where they were tied tightly by the wrists.

The attitude was painful; and to add to this, our mules—not used to be thus “packed,”—kicked and plunged over the ground, to the great mirth of our captors.

This cruel sport was kept up—even after the mules themselves had got tired of it—by the savages pricking the animals with their spears, and placing branches of the cactus under their tails. We were fainting when it ended!

Our captors now divided themselves into two parties, and started up the barranca—taking opposite sides. One went with the Mexican captives, and the girls and children of the tribe. The larger party, under Dacoma, now head-chief—for the other had been killed in the conflict—guarded *us*.

We were carried up that side on which was the spring; and, arriving at the water, were halted for the night. We were taken off the mules, and securely tied to one another—our guards watching us without intermission till morning. We were then “packed” as before, and carried westward across the Desert.

CHAPTER L.

A FAST DYE.

AFTER a four days' journey, painful even to be remembered, we re-entered the valley of Navajo. The other captives, along with the great caballada, had arrived before us; and we saw the plundered cattle scattered over the plain.

As we approached the town, we were met by crowds of women and children, far more than we had seen on our former visit. These were guests, who had come in from other villages of the Navajoes, that lay farther to the north. They were there to witness the triumphant return of the warriors, and partake of the great feast, that always follows a successful foray.

I noticed many white faces among them, with features of the Iberian race! They had been captives; they were now the wives of warriors. They were dressed like the others and seemed to participate in the general joy! They, like Seguin's daughter, had been *Indianized*.

There were many Mestizoes, half-bloods, the descendants of Indians, and their Mexican captives—the offspring of many a Sabine wedding!

We were carried through the streets, and out to the western side of the village. The crowd followed us with mingled exclamations of triumph, hatred, and curiosity. At the distance of a hundred yards or so from the houses, and close to the river bank, our guards drew up.

I had turned my eyes on all sides as we passed through, as well as my awkward position would permit. I could see nothing of *her*, or any of the female captives. Where could they be? Perhaps in the temple.

This building stood on the opposite side of the town, and the houses prevented me from seeing it. Its top only was visible from the spot where we had been halted.

We were untied and taken down. We were happy at being relieved from the painful attitude in which we had ridden all the way. We congratulated ourselves that we should now be allowed to sit upright. Our self-congratulation was brief. We soon found that the change was "from the frying-pan to the fire." We were only to be "turned." We had hitherto lain upon our bellies; we were now to be laid upon our backs!

In a few moments the change was accomplished, our captors handling us as unceremoniously as though we were inanimate things. Indeed, we were nearly so.

We were spread upon the green turf, on our backs. Around each man four long pins were driven into the ground, in the form of a parallelogram. Our arms and legs were stretched out to their widest; and raw-hide thongs were looped about our wrists and ankles. These were passed over the pins, and drawn so tightly, that our joints cracked with the cruel tension! Thus we lay, faces upturned, like so many hides spread out to be sun-dried!

We were placed in two ranks "endways," in such a manner, that the heads of the front rank men rested between the feet of their respective "rears." As there were six of us in all, we formed three files, with short intervals between.

Our attitudes and fastenings left us without the power of moving a limb. The only member over which we had any control was the head; and this, thanks to the flexibility of our necks, we could turn about, so as to see what was going on in front, or on either side of us.

As soon as we were fairly staked down I had the curiosity to raise my head, and look around me. I found that I was "rear rank, right file," and that my file leader was the *ci-devante* soldier, O'Cork.

The Indian guards after having stripped us of most of our clothing left us; and the girls and squaws now began to crowd around. I noticed that they were gathering in front of my position, and forming a dense circle around the Irishmen. I was struck with their ludicrous gestures, their strange exclamations, and the puzzled expression of their countenances.

"Ta—yah! Ta—yah!" cried they, and the whole crowd burst out into shrill screams of laughter.

What could it mean? Barney was evidently the subject of their mirth; but what was there about him to cause it, more than any of the rest of us?

I raised my head to ascertain. The riddle was solved at once. One of the Indians in going off, had taken the Irishman's cap with him; and the round red head was exposed to view. It lay midway, between my feet, like a luminous ball; and I saw that it was the object of diversion.

By degrees the squaws drew nearer, until they were huddled up in a thick crowd around the body of our comrade. At length one of them stooped, and touched the head, drawing back her fingers with a start and a gesture, as if she had burned them!

This elicited fresh peals of laughter, and very soon all the women of the village were around the Irishman, "scrouting" one another to get a closer view. None of the rest of us were heeded—except to be liberally trampled upon; and half a dozen big, heavy squaws were standing upon my limbs—the better to see over one another's shoulders.

As there was no great stock of petticoats to curtain the view, I could still see the Irishman's head gleaming like a meteor through the forest of ankles!

After a while the squaws grew less delicate in their touch; and catching hold of the short stiff bristles, endeavoured to pluck them out—all the while screaming with laughter! I was neither in the state of mind nor the attitude to enjoy a joke; but there was a language in the back of Barney's head, an expression of patient endurance, that would have drawn smiles from a grave-digger; and Sanchez and the others were laughing aloud!

For a long time our comrade endured the infliction, and remained silent, but at last it became too painful for his patience, and he began to speak out.

"Arrah! now girls," said he, in a tone of good-humoured entreaty, "will yez be aizy? Did yez never see rid hair afore?"

The squaws, at hearing the appeal, which of course they understood not, only showed their white teeth in loud laughter.

"In trath, and iv I had yez on the sod, anent the owl Cove o' Cork, I cud show yez as much of it as ud content ye for yer lives. Arrah! now keep aff me! Be the powers, yer trampin the toes aff me feet! Ach! don't rub me! holy mother! will ye lit me alone? Divil resave ye, for a set of——"

The tone in which the last words were uttered, showed that O'Cork had at length lost his temper; but this only increased the assiduity of his tormentors, whose mirth now broke beyond bounds. They "plucked" him harder than ever—yelling all the while—so that, although he continued to scold, I could only hear him at intervals ejaculating "Mother av Moses!" "Tare an ages!" "Holy vishment!" "Livin' Jaysus!" and a variety of similar exclamations.

This scene continued for several minutes; and, then, all at once, there was a lull, and a consultation among the women, that told us they were devising some scheme.

Several girls were sent off to the houses. These presently returned, bringing a large *olla*, and another vessel of smaller dimensions. What did they intend to do with these? We soon learned.

The olla was filled with water from the adjacent stream, and carried up; and the smaller vessel was set down beside Barney's head. We saw that it contained the *yuca* soap of the Northern Mexicans. They were going to *wash out the red!*

The Irishman's hand-stays were now loosened, so that he could sit upright; and a copious coat of the "soft soap" was laid on his head, completely covering the hair. A couple of sinewy squaws then took hold of him by the shoulders, and with bunches of bark fibres applied the water, and scrubbed it in lustily.

The application seemed to be anything but pleasant to Barney, who roared out, ducking his head on all sides to avoid it. But this did not serve him. One of the squaws seized the head between her hands, and held it steady, while the others set at it afresh, and rubbed harder than ever.

The Indians yelled, and danced around; but in the midst of all, I could hear Barney sneezing, and shouting in a smothered voice —

"Holy Mother—htch-teh! Yez may rub—tch-itch!—till yez fetch-teh the skin aff—atch-ich-ich! an' it wont—tsetztsh! come out. I tell yez—itch-ch! it's in the grain—itch-itch! It won't come out—itch-itch!—be me sowl! it won't—atzh-itch-hitch!"

But the poor fellow's expostulations were in vain. The scrubbing continued, with fresh applications of the yuca, for ten minutes, or over; and then the great olla was lifted, and its contents dashed upon his head and shoulders.

What was the astonishment of the women to find that instead of modifying the red colour, it only showed forth, if possible, more vivid than ever!

Another olla of water was lifted, and soused about the Irishman's ears, but with no better effect.

Barney had not had such a washing for many a day—at least, not since he had been under the hands of the regimental barber.

When the squaws saw that in spite of all their efforts, the dye still stuck fast, they desisted; and our comrade was again staked down. His bed was not so dry as before; neither was mine, for the water had saturated the ground about us, and we lay in mud. But this was a small vexation compared with many others we were forced to put up with.

For a long time the Indian women and children clustered around us, each in turn minutely examining the head of our comrade. We, too, came in for a share of their curiosity; but O'Cork was "the elephant."

They had seen hair like ours oftentimes, upon their Mexican captives; but, beyond a doubt, Barney's was the first red poll that had ever been scratched in the valley of Navajo.

Darkness came on at length, and the squaws returned to the village, leaving us in charge of the guards, who all the night sat watchfully beside.

CHAPTER LI.

ASTONISHING THE NATIVES.

UP to this time we had no knowledge of the fate that was designed for us; but, from all that we had ever heard of these savages, as well as from our own experience of them, we anticipated that it would be a cruel one.

Sanchez, however, who knew something of their language, left us no room to doubt such a result. He had gathered, from the conversation of the women, what was before us. After these had gone away, he unfolded the programme, as he had heard it.

“To-morrow,” said he, “they will dance the *Mamanchic*, the great dance of Moctezuma. That is a fête among the girls and women. Next day will be a grand tournament, in which the warriors will exhibit their skill in shooting the bow, in wrestling, and feats of horsemanship. If they would let me join them, I would show them how.”

Sanchez, besides being an accomplished torero, had spent his earlier years in the circus; and was, as we all knew, a most splendid horseman.

“On the third day,” continued he, “we are to ‘run the muck,’ if you know what that is.”

We had all heard of it.

“And on the fourth——”

“Well? upon the fourth?”

“*They will roast us!*”

We might have been more startled at this abrupt declaration, had the idea been new to us; but it was not. The probability

of such an end had been in our thoughts ever since our capture. We knew that they did not save us at the mine, for the purpose of giving us an easier death; and we knew too, that these savages never make *men*-prisoners to keep them alive. Rube was an exception; but his story was a peculiar one, and he escaped only by his extreme cunning. "Their God," continued Sanchez, "is the same as that of the Mexican Aztecs; for these people are of that race, it is believed. I don't know much about that, though I've heard men talk of it. He is called by a devil of a hard name—Carrai!"

"Quetzalcoatl?"

"Cabal! that's the word. Pues, senores; he is a Fire God, and fond of human flesh—prefers it roasted—so they say. That's the use we'll be put to. They'll roast us, to please him; and at the same time satisfy themselves. '*Dos pajaros al un golpe!*' (two birds with one stone.)"

That this was to be our fate was no longer probable but certain; and we slept upon the knowledge of it the best way we could.

In the morning there was dressing and painting among the Indians. After that began dancing—the dance of the Maman-chic.

This ceremony took place upon the prairie, at some distance out in front of the temple.

As it was about commencing, we were taken from our spread positions, and dragged up near it, in order that we might witness the "glory of the nation."

We were still tied, however; but allowed to sit upright. This was some relief; and we enjoyed the change of posture much more than the spectacle.

I could not describe the dance, even if I had watched it, which I did not. As Sanchez had said, it was carried on only by the women of the tribe. Processions of young girls, gaily and fantastically attired, and carrying garlands of flowers, circled and leaped through a variety of figures. There was a raised platform, upon which a warrior and maiden represented Moctezuma and his queen, and around these the girls danced and chanted. The ceremony ended by the dancers kneeling in front, in a grand semi-circle. I saw that the occupants of the throne were Dacoma and Adele. I fancied that the girl looked sad!

"Poor Seguin!" thought I, "there is none to protect her now. Even the false father—the medicine chief—might have been her friend. He, too, is out of the way, and—"

But I did not occupy much time with thoughts of her. There was a far more painful apprehension than that. My mind, as well as my eyes, had dwelt upon the temple during the ceremony. We could see it—from the spot where we had been thrown down; but it was too distant for me to distinguish the faces of the white females, that were clustered along its terraces. *She* no doubt was among them, but I was unable to make her out. Perhaps it was better I was not near enough. I thought so at the time

I saw Indian men among the captives, and I had observed Dacoma—previous to the commencement of the dance—proudly striding before them in all the paraphernalia of his regal robes.

Rube had given me the character of this chief—brave, but brutal and licentious. My heart was oppressed with a painful heaviness, as we were hurried back to our former places.

Most of the next night was spent by the Indians in feasting. Not with us. We were rarely and scantily fed, and we suffered, too, from thirst—our savage guards scarcely deigning to supply us with water, though a river was running at our feet.

Another morning, and the feasting recommenced. More sheep and cattle were slaughtered, and the fires steamed anew with the red joints that were suspended over them.

At an early hour the warriors arrayed themselves—though not in war attire—and the tournament commenced.

We were again dragged forward to witness their savage sports, but placed still farther out on the prairie.

I could distinguish, upon the terrace of the temple, the whitish dresses of the captives. The temple was their place of abode.

Sanchez had told me this. He had heard it from the Indians, as they conversed with one another. The girls were to remain there until the fifth day—that after *our* sacrifice. Then the chief would choose one of the number for his own household, and the warriors would “gamble” for the rest! Oh! these were fearful hours!

Sometimes I wished that I could see her again—once before I died. And then reflection whispered me, it were better not. The knowledge of *my* fate would only add fresh bitterness to hers. Oh! these were fearful hours!

I looked at the savage tournament. There were feats of arms, and feats of equitation. Men rode at a gallop, with one foot only to be seen over the horse: and in this attitude, threw the javelin, or shot the unerring shaft. Others vaulted from horse to horse, as they swept over the prairie at racing speed! Some leaped to their saddles while their horses were running at a gallop! and some exhibited feats with the lasso. Then there was a mock encounter, in which the warriors unhorsed each other, as knights of the olden time!

It was in fact a magnificent spectacle—a grand hippodrome of the desert, but I had no eyes for it.

It had more attraction for Sanchez. I saw that he was observing every new feat with interested attention. All at once he became restless. There was a strange expression on his face. Some thought—some sudden resolve—had taken possession of him.

“Say to your braves,” said he, speaking to one of our guards, in the Navajo tongue, “say that I can beat the best of them at that. I could teach them to ride a horse.”

The savage reported what his prisoner had said; and shortly after several mounted warriors rode up, and replied to the taunt

"You! a poor white slave, ride with the warriors of Navajo! Ha! ha! ha!"

"Can you ride upon your head?" inquired the torero.

"On our heads? How?"

"Standing upon your head, while your horse is in a gallop."

"No—nor you—nor any one. We are the best riders on the plains—we cannot do that."

"I can," affirmed the bull-fighter with emphasis.

"He is boasting—he is a fool," shouted several.

"Let us see!" cried one. "Give him a horse, there is no danger."

"Give me my *own* horse, and I will show you."

"Which is *your* horse?"

"None of them, now, I suppose; but bring me that spotted mustang, and clear me a hundred lengths of him on the prairie, and I will teach you a trick."

As I looked to ascertain what horse Sanchez meant, I saw the mustang which he had ridden from the Del Norté. I noticed my own favourite, too, browsing with the rest.

After a short consultation among themselves, the torero's request was acceded to. The horse, he had pointed out, was lassoed out of the caballada and brought up; and our comrade's thongs were taken off. The Indians had no fear of his escaping. They knew that they could soon overtake such a steed as the spotted mustang; moreover there was a picket constantly kept at each entrance of the valley. Even could he beat them across the plains, it would be impossible for him to get out to the open country. The valley itself was a prison!

Sanchez was not long in making his preparations. He strapped a buffalo-skin tightly on the back of his horse; and then led him round for some time in a circle, keeping him in the same track.

After practising thus for a while, he dropped the bridle, and uttered a peculiar cry, on hearing which the animal fell into a slow gallop around the circle. When the horse had accomplished two or three rounds, the torero leaped upon his back, and performed the well-known feat of riding on his head!

Although a common one among professional equestrians, it was new to the Navajoes, who looked on with shouts of wonder and admiration. They caused the torero to repeat it again, and again, until the spotted mustang had become all of one colour!

Sanchez, however, did not leave off, until he had given his spectators the full programme of the "ring," and had fairly "astonished the natives!"

When the tournament was ended, and we were "hauled" back to the river side, the torero was not with us! Fortunate Sanchez! He had won his life. Henceforth he was to be riding master to the Navajo nation!

CHAPTER LII.

RUNNING A MUCK.

ANOTHER day came—*our* day for action. We saw our enemies making their preparations. We saw them go off to the woods, and return bringing clubs freshly cut from the trees. We saw them dress as for ball play or running.

At an early hour we were taken forward to the front of the temple. On arriving there, I cast my eyes upwards to the terrace. My betrothed was above me—I was recognised!

There was mud upon my spare garments, and spots of blood; there was dust on my hair, there were scars upon my arms; my face and throat were stained with powder, blotches of black burnt powder; in spite of all I was recognised! The eyes of love saw through all.

I find no scene, in all my experience, so difficult to describe as this. Why? There was none so terrible, none in which so many wild emotions were crowded into a moment. A love like ours, tantalised by proximity, almost within reach of each other's embrace, yet separated by relentless fate, and that for ever! The knowledge of each other's situation, the certainty of *my* death, and *her* dishonor. These and a hundred like thoughts rushed into our hearts together. They could not be detailed. They cannot be described. Words would not express them. You may summon fancy to your aid.

I heard her screams, her wild words, and wilder weeping. I saw her snowy check and streaming hair, as, frantic, she rushed

forward on the parapet, as if to spring out! I witnessed her struggles as she was drawn back by her fellow captives; and then, all at once, she was quiet in their arms! She had fainted, and was borne out of my sight.

I was tied by the wrists and ankles. During the scene I had twice risen to my feet, forced up by my emotions, but only to fall down again!

I made no further effort, but lay upon the ground in the agony of impotence.

It was but a short moment; but oh! the feelings that passed over my soul in that moment. It was the compressed misery of a life-time!

* * * * *

For a period of perhaps half-an-hour I regarded not what was going on around me. My mind was not abstracted, but obstructed—absolutely dead. I had no thoughts about anything!

I awoke at length from this stupor. I saw that the savages had completed their preparations for the cruel sport.

Two rows of men extended across the plain to a distance of several hundred yards. They were armed with clubs, and stood facing each other with an interval of three or four paces between their ranks. Down the interval, *we* were to run, receiving blows, from every one who could give them, as we passed! Should any of us succeed in running through the whole line, and reach the mountain foot before we could be overtaken, *the promise was that our lives should be spared!*

“Is this true, Sanchez?” I whispered to the torero, who was standing near me.

“No,” was the reply, given also in a whisper. “It is only a trick to make you run the better, and show them more sport. You are to die all the same. I heard them say so.”

Indeed, it would have been but slight grace had they given us our lives on such conditions; for it would have been impossible for the strongest and swiftest man to have passed through between their lines.

“Sanchez!” I said again, addressing the torero; “Seguin was your friend. You will do all you can for *her?*”

Sanchez well knew whom I meant.

“I will, I will!” he replied, seeming deeply affected.

“Brave Sanchez! tell her how I felt for her; no, no, you need not tell her that.”

I scarce knew what I was saying.

“Sanchez,” I again whispered, a thought that had been in my mind now returning, “could you not—a knife—a weapon—anything—could you not drop one, when I am set loose?”

“It would be of no use. You could not escape if you had fifty.”

“It may be, not. I would try. At the worst, I can but die; and better die with a weapon in my hands!”

“It would be better,” muttered the torero in reply. “I will

try to help you to a weapon, but my life may be—" he paused. "If you look behind you," he continued in a significant manner, while he appeared to examine the tops of the distant mountains, "you may see a tomahawk. I think it is held carelessly. It might be snatched."

I understood his meaning, and stole a glance around. Dacoma was at a few paces distant, superintending the start. I saw the weapon in his belt. It was loosely stuck. *It might be snatched!*

I possess extreme tenacity of life, with energy to preserve it. I have not illustrated this energy in the adventures through which we have passed; for, up to a late period, I was merely a passive spectator of the scenes enacted, and in general disgusted with their enactment. But at other times I have proved the existence of these traits in my character. In the field of battle, to my knowledge, I have saved my life three times by the quick perception of danger, and the promptness to ward it off. Either *less* or *more* brave, I should have lost it! This may seem an enigma. It appears a puzzle. It is an experience.

In my earlier life, I was addicted to what are termed "manly sports." In running and leaping I never met my superior; and my feats in such exercises are still recorded in the memories of my college companions.

Do not wrong me, and think that I am boasting of these peculiarities. The first is but an accident in my mental character—the others are only rude accomplishments, which—now in my more matured life—I see but little reason to be proud of. I mention them only to illustrate what follows.

Ever since the hour of my capture, I had busied my mind with plans of escape. Not the slightest opportunity had as yet offered. All along the journey we had been guarded with the most zealous vigilance.

During this last night a new plan had occupied me. It had been suggested by seeing Sanchez upon his horse.

I had matured it all to the getting possession of a weapon; and I *had* hopes of escape, although I had neither time nor opportunity to detail them to the torero. It would have served no purpose to have told him now.

I knew that I *might* escape, even without the weapon; but I needed it, in case there might be in the tribe a faster runner than myself. I might be killed in the attempt—that was likely enough; but I knew that death could not come in a worse shape than that in which I was to meet it on the morrow. Weapon or no weapon, I was resolved to escape, or die in attempting it.

I saw them untying O'Cork. He was to run first.

There was a circle of savages around the starting point—old men and idlers of the village, who stood there only to witness the sport.

There was no apprehension of our escaping. That was never

thought of. An enclosed valley, with guards at each entrance. Plenty of horses standing close by, that could be mounted in a few minutes. It would be impossible for any of us to get away from the ground. At least so thought they.

O'Cork started.

Poor Barney! His race was not a long one. He had not run ten paces down the living avenue, when he was knocked over, and carried back, bleeding and senseless, amidst the yells of the delighted crowd.

Another of the men shared a similar fate; and another; and then they unbound *me*.

I rose to my feet; and, during the short interval allowed me, stretched my limbs, imbuing my soul and body with all the energy that desperate circumstances enabled me to concentrate within them.

The signal was again given for the Indians to be ready, and they were soon in their places, brandishing their long clubs, and impatiently waiting for me to make the start.

Dacoma was behind me! With a side glance I had marked well where he stood; and, backing towards him—under pretence of getting a fairer “break”—I came close up to the savage. Then suddenly wheeling—with the spring of a cat and the dexterity of a thief, I caught the tomahawk, and jerked it from his belt!

I aimed a blow, but in my hurry, missed him. I had no time for another. I turned and ran. *He* was so taken by surprise, that I was out of his reach, before he could make a motion to follow me!

I ran, not for the open avenue, but to one side of the circle of spectators, where were the old men and idlers.

These had drawn their hand weapons, and were closing towards me in a thick rank. Instead of endeavouring to break through them, which I doubted my ability to accomplish, I threw all my energy into the spring, and leaped clear over their shoulders. Two or three stragglers struck at me as I passed them, but missed their aim; and, the next moment, I was out upon the open plain, with the whole village yelling at my heels!

I knew well for what I was running. Had it not been for that, I should never have made the start. *I was running for the caballada!*

I was running, too, for my life, and I required no encouragement to induce me to make the best of it.

I soon distanced those who had been nearest me at starting; but the swiftest of the Indians were the young men who had formed the lines; and I saw that these were now forging a-head of the others.

Still they were not gaining upon *me*. My school training stood me a service now

After a mile's chase, I saw that I was within less than half that distance of the caballada, and at least three hundred yards ahead of my pursuers; but to my horror, as I glanced back, I saw mounted men. They were still far behind, but I knew they would soon come up. Was it possible *he* could hear me?

I knew that in these elevated regions sounds are heard twice the ordinary distance; and I shouted, at the top of my voice, "Moro! Moro!"

I did not halt, but ran on, calling as I went.

I saw a sudden commotion among the horses. Their heads were tossed up; and then one dashed out from the drove, and came galloping towards me. I knew the broad black chest and red muzzle. I knew them at a glance. It was my brave steed—my Moro!

The rest followed, trooping after; but before they were up to trample me I had met my horse, and flung myself, panting, upon his back!

I had no reins; but my favourite was used to the guidance of my voice, hands, and knees; and directing him through the herd, I headed for the western end of the valley. I heard the yells of the mounted savages as I cleared the caballada; and, looking back, I saw a string of twenty or more coming after me, as fast as their horses could gallop!

But I had no fear of them now. I knew my Moro too well; and after I had cleared the ten miles of valley, and was springing up the steep front of the sierra, I saw my pursuers still back upon the plain, at a distance of miles!

CHAPTER LIII.

A CONFLICT UPON A CLIFF

MY horse—idle for days—had recovered his full action, and bore me up the rocky path with proud springy step. My nerves drew vigour from his, and the strength of my body was fast returning. It was well. I would soon be called upon to use it. *The picket was still to be passed!*

While escaping from the town—in the excitement of the more proximate peril—I had not thought of this ulterior one. I now remembered. It flashed upon me of a sudden; and I commenced gathering my resolution to meet it.

I knew there *was* a picket upon the mountain. Sanchez had said so. He had heard *them* say so. What number of men composed it? Sanchez had said two; but he was not certain of this. Two would be enough—more than enough for me—still weak—and armed, as I was, with a weapon in the use of which I had little skill.

How would *they* be armed? Doubtless with bows, lances, tomahawks, and knives. Every odds were against me!

At what point should I find them? They were videttes. Their chief duty was to watch the plains without. They would be at some station, then, commanding a view of these.

I remembered the road well—the same by which we had first entered the valley. There was a platform near the western brow of the sierra. I recollected it, for we had halted upon it, while our guide went forward to reconnoitre. A cliff overhung this platform. I remembered that, too—for during the absence of the guide, Seguin and I had dismounted, and climbed it. It

commanded a view of the whole outside country to the south and west. No doubt, then, on that very cliff would the videttes be stationed.

Would they be on its top? If so, it might be best to make a dash, and pass them, before they could descend to the road, running the risk of their missiles—their arrows and lances? Make a dash! No—that would be impossible. I remembered that the path at both ends of the platform narrowed to a width of only a few feet—with the cliff rising above it, and the canon yawning below. It was, in fact, only a ledge of the precipice, along which it was dangerous to pass even at a walk. Moreover, I had re-shod my horse at the mission. The iron was worn smooth; and I knew that the rock was as slippery as glass!

All these thoughts passed through my mind as I neared the summit of the sierra.

The prospect was appalling. The peril before me was extreme; and under other circumstances I would have hesitated to encounter it. But I knew that that which threatened from behind was not less desperate. There was no alternative; and, with only half-formed resolutions as to how I should act, I pushed forward.

I rode with caution, directing my horse as well as I could upon the softer parts of the trail—so that his hoof-strokes might not be heard. At every turn I halted, and scanned the profile of each new prospect. But I did not halt longer than I could help. I knew that I had no time to waste.

The road ascended through a thin wood of cedars and dwarf pinons. It wound, zig-zag, up the face of the mountain. Near the crest of the sierra it obliqued sharply to the right, and trended in to the brow of the canon. There the ledge, already mentioned, became the path; and the road followed its narrow terrace along the very face of the precipice.

On reaching this point I caught a view of the cliff where I expected to see the vidette. I had guessed correctly. He was there, and to my agreeable surprise, there was only one—a single savage!

He was seated upon the very topmost rock of the sierra; and his large brown body was distinctly visible, outlined against the pale blue sky. He was not more than three hundred yards from me, and about a third of that distance above the level of the ledge, along which I had to pass.

I halted the moment I caught sight of him; and sat, making a hurried reconnoissance. As yet he had neither seen nor heard me. His back was to me, and he appeared to be gazing intently toward the west. Beside the rock on which he was, his spear was sticking in the ground, and his shield, bow and quiver were leaning against it. I could see upon his person the sparkle of a knife and tomahawk.

I had said my reconnoissance was a hurried one. I was conscious of the value of every moment; and, almost at a glance, I

formed my resolution. That was, to "run the gauntlet," and attempt passing before the Indian could descend to intercept me. Obedient to this impulse, I gave my animal the signal to move forward.

I rode slowly and cautiously—for two reasons: because my horse dared not go otherwise; and I thought that, by riding quietly, I might get beyond the vidette without attracting his notice. The torrent was hissing below. Its roar ascended to the cliff. It might drown the hoof-stroke.

With this hope I stole onward. My eye passed rapidly from one to the other—from the savage on the cliff, to the perilous path along which my horse crawled, shivering with affright.

When I had advanced about six lengths upon the ledge, the platform came in view; and with it, a group of objects, that caused me to reach suddenly forward, and grasp the forelock of my Moro—a sign by which, in the absence of a bit, I could always halt him. He came at once to a stand; and I surveyed the objects before me with a feeling of despair.

They were two horses—mustangs; and a man—an Indian. The mustangs, bridled and saddled, were standing quietly out upon the platform; and a lasso, tied to the bit-ring of one of them, was coiled around the wrist of the Indian. The latter was sitting upon his hams, close up to the cliff—so that his back touched the rock. His arms lay horizontally across his knees, and upon these his head rested. I saw that he was asleep! Beside him were his bow and quiver, his lance and shield—all leaning against the cliff.

My situation was a terrible one. I knew that I could not pass *him* without being heard, and I knew that *pass him I must*. In fact, I could not have gone back had I wished it—for I had already embarked upon the ledge, and was riding along a narrow shelf, where my horse could not possibly have turned himself!

All at once, the idea entered my mind, that I might slip to the ground, steal forward and with my tomahawk—

It was a cruel thought, but it was the impulse of instinct—the instinct of self-preservation.

It was not decreed that I should adopt so fearful an alternative. Moro, impatient at being delayed in the perilous position, snorted and struck the rock with his hoof. The clink of the iron was enough for the sharp ears of the Spanish horses. They neighed on the instant. The savages sprang to their feet; and their simultaneous yell told me that both had discovered me!

I saw the vidette upon the cliff pluck up his spear, and commenced hurrying downward; but my attention was soon exclusively occupied with his comrade.

The latter, on seeing me, had leaped to his feet, seized his bow, and vaulted, as if mechanically, upon the back of his mustang. Then, uttering a wild shout, he trotted over the platform, and advanced along the ledge to meet me!

An arrow whizzed past my head as he came up, but in his hurry he had aimed badly.

Our horses' heads met. They stood muzzle to muzzle with eyes dilated—their red nostrils streaming into each other. Both snorted fiercely, as if each was imbued with the wrath of his rider. They seemed to know that a death strife was between us.

They seemed conscious, too, of their own danger. They had met at the very narrowest part of the ledge. Neither could have turned or backed off again. One or other must go over the cliff—must fall through a thousand feet into the stony channel of the torrent!

I sat with a feeling of utter helplessness. I had no weapon with which I could reach my antagonist—no missile. *He* had his bow; and I saw him adjusting a second arrow to the string!

At this crisis, three thoughts passed through my mind—not as I detail them here—but following each other, like quick flashes of lightning. My first impulse was to urge my horse forward; trusting to his superior weight to precipitate the lighter animal from the ledge. Had I been worth a bridle and spurs, I would have adopted this plan. But I had neither; and the chance was too desperate without them. I abandoned it for another. I would hurl my tomahawk at the head of my antagonist. No! The third thought—I will dismount, and use my weapon upon the mustang.

This last was clearly the best; and obedient to its impulse, I slipped down between Moro and the cliff. As I did so, I heard the “hist” of another arrow passing my cheek. It had missed me from the suddenness of my movements.

In an instant, I squeezed past the flanks of my horse; and glided forward upon the ledge, directly in front of that of my adversary.

The animal, seeming to guess my intentions, snorted with affright and reared up; but was compelled to drop again into the same tracks.

The Indian was fixing another shaft. Its notch never reached the string. As the hoofs of the mustang came down upon the rock, I aimed my blow. I struck the animal over the eye. I felt the skull yielding before my hatchet; and the next moment horse and rider, the latter screaming and struggling to clear himself of the saddle, disappeared over the cliff.

There was a moment's silence—a long moment—in which I knew they were falling—falling—down that fearful depth. Then came a loud splash—the percussion of their united bodies on the water below!

I had no curiosity to look over, and as little time. When I regained my upright attitude—for I had come to my knees in giving the blow—I saw the vidette just leaping upon the platform. He did not halt a moment, but advanced at a run, holding his snear at a charge.

I saw that I would be impaled, unless I could parry the thrust I struck wildly, but with success. The lance blade glinted from the head of my weapon. Its shaft passed me; and our bodies met with a concussion that caused us both to reel upon the very edge of the cliff!

As soon as I had recovered my balance, I followed up my blows, keeping close to my antagonist—so that he could not again use his lance. Seeing this, he dropped the weapon, and drew his tomahawk. We now fought hand to hand; hatchet to hatchet!

Back and forward along the ledge we drove each other—as the advantage of the blows told in our favour, or against us.

Several times we grappled, and would have pushed each other over; but the fear that each felt of being dragged after mutually restrained us; and we let go, and trusted again to our tomahawks.

Not a word passed between us. We had nothing to say—even could we have understood each other. But we had no boast to make—no taunt to urge—nothing before our minds, but the fixed dark purpose of murdering each other!

After the first onset, the Indian had ceased yelling, and we both fought with the intense earnestness of silence.

There were sounds though; an occasional sharp exclamation; our quick high breathing; the clinking of our tomahawks; the neighing of our horses; and the continuous roar of the torrent. These were the symphonies of our conflict.

For some minutes we battled upon the ledge. We were both cut and bruised in several places; but neither of us had as yet received or inflicted a mortal wound.

At length, after a continuous shower of blows, I succeeded in beating my adversary back, until we found ourselves out upon the platform. There we had ample room to wind our weapons; and we struck with more energy than ever. After a few strokes, our tomahawks met with a violent concussion, that sent them flying from our hands.

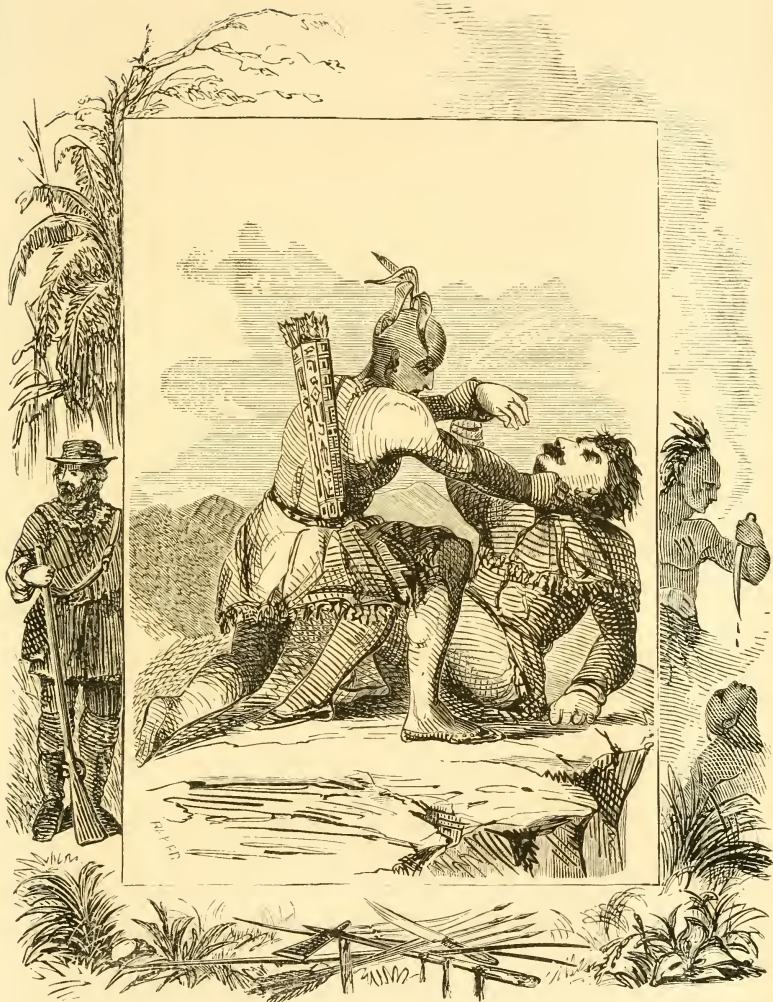
Neither dare stoop to regain his weapon; and we rushed upon each other with naked arms, clutched, wrestled a moment, and then fell together to the earth.

I thought my antagonist had a knife. I must have been mistaken; else he would have used it. But without it, I soon found that in this species of encounter he was my master. His muscular arms encircled me, until my ribs cracked under the embrace. We rolled along the ground, over and over each other. O God! we were nearing the edge of the precipice!

I could not free myself from his grasp. His sinewy fingers were across my throat. They clasped me tightly around the trachea—stopping my breath. He was strangling me!

I grew weak and nerveless. I could resist no longer. I felt my hold relax. I grew weaker and weaker. I was dying—I was—O God—O Heaven pard—on—Oh—

* * * * *



We rolled along the ground, over each other. O God! we were nearing the edge of the precipice! I could not free myself from his grasp. His sinewy fingers were across my throat. They clasped me tightly around the trachea—stopping my breath. He was strangling me!—PAGE 292.

I could not have been long insensible, for when consciousness returned, I was still warm—sweating from the effects of the struggle—and my wounds were bleeding freshly and freely! I felt that I yet lived. I saw that I was still upon the platform; but where was my antagonist? Why had he not finished me? Why had he not flung me over the cliff?

I rose upon my elbow, and looked around. I could see no living thing, but my own horse and that of the Indian, that galloped over the platform, kicking and plunging at each other.

But I heard sounds; sounds of fearful import; like the hoarse angry worrying of dogs, mingling with the cries of a human voice; a voice uttered in agony!

What could it mean? I saw that there was a break in the platform; a deep cut in the rock, and out of this the sounds appeared to issue.

I rose to my feet, and tottering toward the spot, looked in. It was an awful sight to look upon. The gully was some ten feet in depth; and at its bottom, among the weeds and cacti, a huge dog was engaged in tearing something that screamed and struggled. It was a man—an Indian. All was explained at a glance. The dog was Alp—the man was my late antagonist!

As I came upon the edge, the dog was on top of his adversary, and kept himself uppermost by desperate bounds from side to side—still dashing the other back as he attempted to rise to his feet. The savage was crying in despair. I thought I saw the teeth of the animal fast in his throat; but I watched the struggle no longer. Voices from behind caused me to turn round. My pursuers had reached the canon, and were urging their animals along the ledge!

I staggered up to my horse; and, climbing upon his back, once more directed him to the terrace—that part which led outward. In a few minutes I had cleared the cliff, and was hurrying down the mountain. As I approached its foot I heard a rustling in the bushes, that, on both sides, lined the path. Then an object sprang out a short distance behind me. It was the San Bernard.

As he came alongside, he uttered a low whimper; and once or twice wagged his tail. I knew not how he could have escaped, for he must have waited until the Indians reached the platform, but the fresh blood that stained his jaws, and clotted the shaggy hair upon his breast, showed that he had left one with but little power to detain him.

On reaching the plain, I looked back. I saw my pursuers coming down the face of the sierra; but I had still nearly half a mile of start; and, taking the snowy mountain for my guide, I struck out into the open prairie.

CHAPTER LIV.

AN UNEXPECTED RENCONTRE.

As I rode off from the mountain foot, the white peaks glistened at a distance of thirty miles. There was not a hillock between. Not a break or bush, excepting the low shrubs of the *artemisia*.

It was not yet noon. Could I reach the snow mountains before sunset? If so, I trusted in being able to follow our old trail to the mine. Thence I might keep on to the Del Norté, by striking a branch of the Paloma, or some other lateral stream. Such were my plans, undefined as I rode forth.

I knew that I should be pursued, almost to the gates of El Paso; and, when I had ridden forward about a mile, a glance to the rear showed me that the Indians had just reached the plain, and were striking out after me.

It was no longer a question of speed. I knew that I had the heels of their whole cavalcade. Did my horse possess the "bottom?"

I knew the tireless, wiry nature of the Spanish mustang; and their animals were of that race. I knew they could gallop for a long day without breaking down; and this led me to fear for the result.

Speed was nothing now, and I made no attempt to keep it up. I was determined to economise the strength of my steed. I could not be overtaken so long as *he* lasted; and I galloped slowly forward watching the movements of my pursuers, and keeping a regular distance ahead of them.

At times I dismounted, to relieve my horse, and ran alongside of him. My dog followed—occasionally looking up in my face,

and seemingly conscious why I was making such a hurried journey.

During all the day I was never out of sight of the Indians; in fact, I could have distinguished their arms, and counted their numbers at any time. There was in all about a score of horsemen. The stragglers had gone back, and only the well mounted men now continued the pursuit.

As I neared the foot of the snowy peak, I remembered there was water at our old camping ground in the pass; and I pushed my horse faster, in order to gain time to refresh both him and myself. I intended to make a short halt, and allow the noble brute to breathe himself, and snatch a bite of the bunch-grass that grew around the spring. There was nothing to fear so long as his strength held out; and I knew that this was the plan to sustain it.

It was near sundown as I entered the defile. Before riding in among the rocks, I looked back. During the last hour I had gained upon my pursuers. They were still at least three miles out upon the plain—and I saw that they were toiling on wearily.

I fell into a train of reflection as I rode down the ravine. I was now upon a known trail. My spirits rose. My hopes, so long clouded over, began to assume a brightness and buoyancy—greater from the very influence of reaction. I would still be able to rescue my betrothed. My whole energies—my fortune—my life—would be devoted to this one object. I would raise a band stronger than ever Seguin had commanded. I would get followers among the returning *employes* of the caravan—teamsters, whose term of service had expired. I would search the posts and mountain rendezvous for trappers and hunters. I would apply to the Mexican government for aid—in money, in troops. I would appeal to the citizens of El Paso, of Chihuahua, of Durango.

“Geehosaphat! hyurs a feller ridin’ ’ithout eyther saddle or bridle!”

Five or six men with rifles sprang out from the rocks, surrounding me.

“May an Injun eat me ef ’taint the young feller as tuk me for a grizzly! Billee! look hyur! hyur he is—the very fellur! He! he! he! ho-ho-hoo!”

“Rube! Garey!”

“What! by Jove! it’s my friend, Haller. Hurrah! old fellow, don’t you know me?”

“St. Vrain!”

“That it is. Don’t I look like him? It would have been a harder task to identify you, but for what the old trapper has been telling us about you. But come! how have you got out of the hands of the Philistines?”

"First, tell me who you all are? What are you doing here?"

"Oh, we're a picket. The army is below."

"The army?"

"Why, we call it so. There's six hundred of us; and that's about as big an army as usually travels in these parts."

"But who? What are they?"

"They are of all sorts and colours. There's Chihualhuenos and Pasenos, and niggers, and hunters, and trappers, and teamsters—your humble servant commands these last named gentry; and then there's the band of your friend Seguin——"

"Seguin! Is he——"

"What? He's at the head of all. But come, they're camped down by the spring. Let us go down. You don't look over-fed; and, old fellow, there's a drop of the best Paso in my saddle-bags. Come!"

"Stop a moment! I am pursued."

"Pursued!" echoed the hunters—together raising their rifles and looking up the ravine. "How many?"

"About twenty."

"Are they close upon you?"

"No."

"How long before we may expect them?"

"They are three miles back, with tired horses, as you may suppose."

"Three quarters—half an hour at any rate. Come, we will have time to go down, and make arrangements for their reception. Rube! you, with the rest, can remain here. We will join you before they get forward. Come, Haller, come!"

Following my faithful and warm-hearted friend, I rode on to the spring. Around it I found "the army;" and it had somewhat of that appearance—for two or three hundred of the men were in uniform. These were the volunteer guards of Chihuahua and El Paso.

The late "raid" of the Indians had exasperated the inhabitants, and this unusually strong muster was the consequence. Seguin had met them with the remnant of his band at El Paso, and hurried them forward on the Navajo trail. It was from him St. Vrain had heard of my capture; and, in hopes of rescuing me, had joined the expedition with about forty or fifty employés of the caravan.

Most of Seguin's band had escaped after the fight in the baranca; and, among the rest, I was rejoiced to hear, El Sol and La Luna. They were now on their return with Seguin; and I found them at his tent.

Seguin welcomed me as the bearer of joyful news. *They* were still safe. That was all I could tell him, and all he asked for, during our hurried congratulation.

We had no time for idle talk. A hundred men immediately

mounted, and rode up the ravine. On reaching the ground occupied by the picket, they led their horses behind the rocks and formed an ambuscade. The order was that all the Indians must be killed or taken!

The plan hastily agreed upon was, to let them pass the ambushed men and ride on—until they had got in sight of the main body. Then both divisions were to close upon them.

It was a dry ravine above the spring, and the horses had made no tracks upon its rocky bed. Moreover the Indians, ardent in their pursuit of me, would not be on the lookout for any "sign" before reaching the water. Should they pass the ambuscade, then would not a man of them escape, as the defile on both sides was walled in by a precipice.

After the others had gone, about a hundred men at the spring leaped into their saddles, and sat with their eyes bent up the pass.

They were not kept long in waiting. A few minutes after the ambuscade had been placed an Indian showed himself round an angle of the rock, about two hundred yards above the spring. He was the foremost of the warriors and must have passed the ambushed horsemen; but as yet the latter lay still. Seeing a body of men, the savage halted with a quick jerk; and then, uttering a cry, wheeled and rode back upon his comrades. These, imitating his example, wheeled also; but before they had fairly turned themselves in the ravine the cachéd horsemen sprang out from the rocks, and came galloping down.

The Indians now seeing that they were completely in the trap—with overpowering numbers on both sides of them—threw down their spears, and begged for mercy!

In a few minutes they were all captured. The whole affair did not occupy half an hour; and, with our prisoners securely tied, we returned to the spring.

The leading men now gathered around Seguin to settle on some plan for attacking the town. Should we move on to it that night?

I was asked for my advice, and, of course answered, yes. The sooner the better, for the safety of the captives. My feelings, as well as those of Seguin, could not brook delay. Besides, several of our late comrades were to die on the morrow. We might still be in time to save them.

How were we to approach the valley?

This was the next point to be discussed.

The enemy would now be certain to have their videttes at both ends; and it promised to be a clear moonlight until morning. They could easily see such a large body approaching from the open plain. Here then was a difficulty.

"Let us divide," said one of Seguin's old band, "Let a party go in at each end. That'll git 'em in the trap."

"Wagh!" replied another, "that would never do. Thar's ten miles o' rough wood thar. If we raised the niggurs by such a

show as this, they'd take to them—gals an' all—and that's the last we'd see o' them."

This speaker was clearly in the right. It would never do to make our attack openly. Stratagem must again be used.

A head was now called into the council that soon mastered the difficulty, as it had many another. That was the skinless, earless head of the trapper Rube.

"Cap.," said he after a short delay, "'Ee needn't show yur crowd till we've first tuk the luk-outs by the eend o' the kenyun."

"How can we take them?" inquired Seguin.

"Strip them twenty niggurs," replied Rube, pointing to our captives, "an' let twenty o' us put on their duds. Then we kin take the young fellur, him hyur as tuk me for the grizzly—he-he-he!—Old Rube tuk for a grizzly! we kin take him back a pris'ner. Now, Cap., do 'ee see how?"

"You would have these twenty to keep far in the advance then; capture the videttes—and wait till the main body comes up?"

"Sartinly—thet's my idee—adzactly."

"It is the best—the only one. We will follow it." And Seguin immediately ordered the Indians to be stripped of their dresses. These consisted mostly of garments that had been plundered from the people of the Mexican towns, and were of all cuts and colours.

"I'd recommend 'ee, Cap.," suggested Rube, seeing that Seguin was looking out to choose the men for this advance party. "I'd recommend 'ee to take a smart sprinklin o' the Delawares. Them Navaghs is mighty cute, and not easy bamfoozled. They moult sight white skin by moonlight. Them o' us that must go along 'll hev to paint Injun, or we'll be fooled arter all—we will."

Seguin, taking this hint, selected for the advance most of the Delaware and Shawano Indians; and these were now dressed in the clothes of the Navajoes. He himself, with Rube, Garey, and a few other whites, made up the required number. I, of course, was to go along, and play the role of a prisoner.

The whites of the party soon accomplished their change of dress, and "painted Injun"—a trick of the prairie toilet well known to all of them.

Rube had but little change to make. His hue was already of sufficient deepness for the disguise: and he was not going to trouble himself by throwing off the old shirt or leggins. That could hardly have been done without cutting both open, and Rube was not likely to make such a sacrifice of his favorite buckskins. He proceeded to draw the other garments over them; and, in a short time, was habited in a pair of slashing calzoneros with bright buttons from the hip to the ankle. These with a smart tight-fitting jacket—that had fallen to his share—and a jaunty sombrero cocked upon his head, gave him the air of a most comical dandy! The men fairly yelled at seeing him thus metamorphosed:

and old Rube himself grinned heartily at the odd feeling which the dress occasioned him.

Before the sun had set, everything was in readiness, and the advance started off. The main body, under St. Vrain, was to follow an hour after. A few men—Mexicans—were to remain by the spring in charge of the Navajo prisoners.

CHAPTER LV.

THE RESCUE.

WE struck directly across the plain for the eastern entrance of the valley. We reached the canon about two hours before day. Everything turned out as we had anticipated. There was an outpost of five Indians at the end of the pass, but we had stolen upon them unawares, and they were captured without the necessity of our firing a shot.

The main body came up soon after; and, preceded by our party as before, passed through the canon. Arriving at the border of the woods, nearest the town, we halted and cached among the trees.

The town was glistening in the clear moonlight, and deep silence was over the valley. There were none stirring at so early an hour, but we could descry two or three dark objects down by the river. We knew them to be the sentinels that stood over our captive comrades. The sight was gratifying, for it told us they still lived. They little dreamt, poor fellows, how near was the hour of their deliverance. For the same reasons that had influenced us on a former occasion, the attack was not to be made until daybreak, and we waited as before, but with a very different prospect. There were now six hundred warriors in the town—about our own number—and we knew that a desperate engagement was before us. We had no fear as to the result, but we feared that the vengeful savages might take it into their heads to despatch their captives while we fought. They knew that to recover these was our main object; and, if themselves defeated, that would give them the satisfaction of a terrible vengeance.

All this we knew was far from improbable. But to guard against the *possibility* of such an event, every precaution was to be taken.

We were satisfied that the captive women were still in the temple. Rube assured us that it was their universal custom to keep new prisoners there for several days after their arrival, until they were finally distributed among the warriors. The queen, too, dwelt in this building.

It was resolved, then, that the disguised party should ride forward, conducting me as their prisoner, by the first light. That they should surround the temple, and by a clever *coup* secure the white captives. A signal then given on the bugle, or the first shots fired, was to bring the main body forward at a gallop.

This was plainly the best plan ; and having fully arranged its details, we waited the approach of the dawn.

It was not long in coming. The moonlight became mixed with the blue rays of the aurora, and objects were seen more distinctly. As the milky quartz caught the hues of morning, we rode out of our cover, and forward over the plain. I was apparently tied upon my horse, and guarded between two of the Delawares !

On approaching the town we saw several men upon the roofs. They ran to and fro, summoning others out ; and large groups began to appear along the terraces. As we came nearer we were greeted with shouts of congratulation !

Avoiding the streets, we pushed directly for the temple, at a brisk trot. On arriving at its base we suddenly halted, flung ourselves from our horses, and climbed the ladders. There were many women upon the parapets of the building. Among these Seguin recognised his daughter, the queen. She was at once secured and forced into the inside. The next moment I held my betrothed in my arms, while her mother was by our side. The other captives were there ; and without waiting to offer any explanation, we hurried them all within the rooms, and guarded the doors with our pistols.

The whole manœuvre had not occupied two minutes ; but before its completion a wild cry announced that the *ruse* was detected. Vengeful yells rang over the town, and the warriors, leaping down from the houses, ran towards the temple.

Arrows began to hurtle around us ; but above all other sounds pealed the notes of the bugle, summoning our comrades to the attack.

Quick upon the signal, they were seen debouching from the woods, and coming down at a gallop.

When within two hundred yards of the houses, the charging horsemen split into two divisions, and wheeled round the town, with the intention of attacking it on both sides.

The Indians ran to defend the skirts of the village ; but in spite of their arrow-flights, that dismounted several, the horsemen closed in ; and flinging themselves from their horses, fought hand to hand among the walls. The shouts of defiance, the sharp ringing of rifles, and the louder reports of the escopettes, announced that the battle was fairly begun.

A large party, headed by El Sol and St. Vrain, had ridden up to the temple. Seeing that we had secured the captives, these too dismounted, and commenced an attack upon that side of the

town, clambering up to the houses, and driving out the braves who defended them.

The fight became general. Shouts and shots rent the air. Men were seen upon high roofs face to face in deadly and desperate conflict. Crowds of women, screaming and terrified, rushed along the terraces, or ran out upon the plain, making for the woods. Frightened horses, snorting and neighing, galloped through the streets, and off over the open prairie, with trailing bridles; while others, closed in corrals, plunged and broke over the walls. It was a wild scene, a terrific picture!

Through all, I was only a spectator. I was guarding a door of the temple, in which were our own friends. My elevated position gave me a view of the whole village; and I could trace the progress of the battle from house to house. I saw that many were falling on both sides, for the savages fought with the courage of despair. I had no fears for the result. The whites, too, had wrongs to redress; and, by the remembrance of these, were equally nerved for the struggle. In this kind of encounter they had the advantage in arms. It was only on the plains that their savage foes were feared, when charging with their long and death-dealing lances.

As I continued to gaze over the azoteas, a scene riveted my attention, and I forgot all others. Upon a high roof two men were engaged in combat, fierce and deadly. Their brilliant dresses had attracted me, and I soon recognised the combatants. They were Dacoma and the Maricopa!

The Navajo fought with a spear, and I saw that the other held his rifle clubbed and empty!

When my eye first rested upon them, the latter had just parried a thrust, and was aiming a blow at his antagonist. It fell without effect; and Dacoma, turning quickly, brought his lance again to the charge. Before El Sol could ward it off, the thrust was given, and the weapon appeared to pass through his body!

I involuntarily uttered a cry, as I expected to see the noble Indian fall. What was my astonishment at seeing him brandish his tomahawk over his head, *rush up the spear*, and with a crashing blow, stretch the Navajo at his feet!

Drawn down by the impaling shaft, he fell over the body; but in a moment struggled up again; drew the long lance from his flesh, and, tottering forward to the parapet, shouted out—

“Come, Luna! *Our mother is avenged!*”

I saw the girl spring upon the roof, followed by Garey; and the next moment the wounded man sank, fainting in the arms of the trapper.

Rube, St. Vrain, and several others now climbed to the roof and commenced examining the wound. I watched them with feelings of painful suspense, for the character of this most singular man had inspired me with friendship. Presently, St.

Vrain joined me, and I was assured that the wound was not mortal. The Maricopa would live.

The battle was now ended. The warriors who survived had fled to the forest. Shots were heard only at intervals. An occasional shout, the shriek of some savage discovered lurking among the walls.

Many white captives had been found in the town, and were brought in front of the temple, guarded by the Mexicans. The Indian women had escaped to the woods during the engagement. It was well, for the hunters and volunteer soldiery, exasperated by wounds, and heated by the conflict, now raged around like Furies. Smoke ascended from many of the houses; flames followed, and the greater part of the town was soon reduced to a smouldering ruin.

We stayed all that day by the Navajo village, to recruit our animals, and prepare for our homeward journey across the desert. The plundered cattle were collected. Some were slaughtered for immediate use, and the rest placed in the charge of vaqueros, to be driven on the hoof. Most of the Indian horses were lassoed, and brought in, some to be ridden by the rescued captives, others as the booty of the conquerors. But it was not safe to remain long in the valley. There were other tribes of Navajoes to the north, who would soon be down upon us. There were their allies, the great nations of the Apaché to the south, and the Nijoras to the west, and we knew that all these would unite, and follow on our trail. The object of the expedition was attained, at least as far as its leader had designed it. A great number of captives were recovered, whose friends had long since mourned them as lost for ever.

It would be some time before they would renew those savage forays, in which they had annually desolated the pueblos of the frontier.

By sunrise of the next day we had repassed the canon, and were riding toward the Snowy mountain.

CHAPTER LVI.

EL PASO DEL NORTE.

I WILL not describe the re-crossing of the desert plains. I will not detail the incidents of our homeward journey.

With all its hardships and weariness, to me it was a pleasant one. It is but pleasure to attend upon her we love; and that along the route was my chief duty. The smiles I received, far more than repaid me for the labour I underwent in its discharge. But it was not labour. It was no labour to fill her *xuages* with fresh water at every spring or runlet; to spread the blanket softly over her saddle; to weave her a "quitasol" out of the broad leaves of the palmilla; to assist her in mounting and dismounting; no, that was not labour to me.

We were happy as we journeyed. I was happy, for I knew that I had fulfilled my contract, and won my bride; and the very remembrance of the perils through which we had so lately passed, heightened the happiness of both. But one thing cast an occasional gloom over our thoughts—the queen, Adele.

She was returning to the home of her childhood; not voluntarily, but as a captive; captive to her own kindred, her father and mother!

Throughout the journey, both these waited upon her with tender assiduity, almost constantly gazing at her with sad and silent looks. There was woe in their hearts.

We were not pursued; or, if so, our pursuers never came up. Perhaps we were not followed at all. The foe had been crippled and cowed by the terrible chastisement; and we knew it would

be some time before they could muster force enough to take our trail. Still we lost not a moment, but travelled as fast as the *ganados* could be pushed forward.

In five days we reached the Barranca del Oro, and passed the old mine—the scene of our bloody conflict. During our halt among the ruined ranches, I strayed away from the rest, impelled by a painful curiosity, to see if aught remained of my late follower, or his fellow victim. I went to the spot where I had last seen their bodies. Yes. Two skeletons lay in front of the shaft, as cleanly picked by the wolves as if they had been dressed for the studio of an anatomist. It was all that remained of the unfortunate men.

After leaving the Barranca del Oro, we struck the head waters of the Rio Mimbres; and keeping on the banks of that stream, followed it down to the Del Norté. Next day we entered the pueblo of El Paso.

A scene of singular interest greeted us on our arrival. As we neared the town, the whole population flocked out to meet us. Some had come forth from curiosity; some to welcome us, and take part in the ceremony that hailed our triumphant return, but not a few impelled by far different motives. We had brought with us a large number of rescued captives, nearly fifty in all, and these were soon surrounded by a crowd of citizens. In that crowd were yearning mothers and fond sisters, lovers newly awakened from despair, and husbands who had not yet ceased to mourn. There were hurried inquiries, quick glances that betokened keen anxiety. There were "scenes" and shouts of joy, as each one recognised some long-lost object of a dear affection. But there were other scenes of a diverse character, scenes of woe and wailing, for many of those who had gone forth, but a few days before, in the pride of health and the panoply of war, many came not back!

I was struck with one episode. A painful one to witness. Two women, of the poblana class, had laid hold upon one of the captives—a girl of, I should think, about ten years of age. Each claimed the girl for her daughter; and each of them held one of her arms, not rudely, but to hinder the other from carrying her off. A crowd had circled them, and both the women were urging their claims in loud and plaintive voices.

One stated the age of the girl, hastily narrated the history of her capture by the savages, and pointed to certain marks upon her person, to which she declared she was ready, at any moment to make "juramento." The other appealed to the spectators to look at the colour of the child's hair and eyes—which slightly differed from that of the anti-claimant—and called upon them to note the resemblance she bore to another, who stood by, and who, she alleged, was the child's elder sister. Both talked at the same time, and kissed the girl repeatedly as they talked.

The little wild captive stood between the two, receiving their alternate embraces with a wondering and puzzled expression.

She was, in truth, a most interesting child, habited in the Indian costume, and browned by the sun of the Desert. Whichever might have been the mother, it was evident she had no remembrance of either of them. *She had no mother!* In her infancy she had been carried off to the Desert; and, like the daughter of Seguin, had forgotten the scenes of her childhood. She had forgotten father, mother, all!

It was a scene, as I have said, painful to witness. The anguished looks of the women; their passionate appeals; their wild but affectionate embraces, lavished upon the girl; their plaintive cries mingled with sobs and weeping. Indeed it was a painful scene.

It was brought to a close, at least as far as I witnessed it. The alcalde came upon the ground: and the girl was given in charge to the "policia," until the true mother should bring forward more definite proofs of maternity. I never heard the finale of this little romance.

The return of the expedition to El Paso was celebrated by a triumphant ovation. Cannon boomed, bells rang, fireworks hissed and sputtered, masses were sung, and music filled the streets. There was feasting and merriment, and the night was turned into a blazing illumination of wax candles, and "un gran funcion de baile"—a *fandango*.

Next morning Seguin, with his wife and daughters, made preparation to journey on to the old hacienda, on the Del Norté. The house was still standing—so we had heard. It had not been plundered! The savages, on taking possession of it, had been closely pressed by a body of Pasenos; and had hurried off with their captives, leaving every thing else as they had found it.

St. Vrain and I were to accompany the party to their home.

The chief had plans for the future, in which both I and my friend were interested. There were we to mature them.

I found the returns of my trading speculation even greater than St. Vrain had promised. My ten thousand dollars had trebled itself. St. Vrain, too was master of a large amount, and we were enabled to bestow our bounty on those of our late comrades who had proved themselves worthy. But most of them had received "bounty" from another source.

As we rode out from El Paso, I chanced to look back. There was a long string of dark objects waving over the gates. There was no mistaking what they were—for they were unlike any thing else. *They were scalps!*

CHAPTER LVII.

TOUCHING THE CHORDS OF MEMORY.

It is the second evening after our arrival at the old house on the Del Norté. We have gone up to the azotéa—Seguin, St. Vrain, and myself. I know not why, but guided thither by our host. Perhaps he wishes to look once more over that wild land—the theatre of so many scenes in his eventful life:—once more, for upon the morrow he leaves it forever. Our plans have been formed—we journey upon the morrow—we are going over the broad plains to the waters of the Mississippi. *They go with us.*

It is a lovely evening, and warm. The atmosphere is elastic; such an atmosphere as you can find only on the high tables of the western world. It seems to act upon all animated nature, judging from its voices. There is joy in the songs of the birds; in the humming of the homeward bee. There is a softness, too, in those sounds that reach us from the farther forest—those sounds usually harsh—the voices of the wilder and fiercer creatures of creation. All seem attuned to peace and love.

The song of the arriero is joyous; for many of these are below, packing for our departure.

I, too, am joyous. I have been so for days; but the light atmosphere around, and the bright prospect before me, have heightened the pulsations of my happiness.

Not so my companions on the azotéa. Both seem sad.

Seguin is silent; I thought he had climbed up here to take a last look of the fair valley.

Not so. He paces back and forth with folded arms, his eyes fixed upon the cemented roof. They see no farther. They see

not at all. The eye of his mind only is active; and that is looking inward. His air is abstracted; his brow is clouded; his thoughts are gloomy and painful. I know the cause of all this. *She is still a stranger!*

But St. Vrain—the witty, the buoyant, the sparkling St. Vrain—what misfortune has befallen *him*? What cloud is crossing the rose-coloured field of *his* horoscope? What reptile is gnawing at *his* heart, that not even the seething wine of El Paso can drown? St. Vrain is speechless; St. Vrain is sighing; St. Vrain is sad! I half divine the cause. St. Vrain is——

The tread of light feet upon the stone stairway—the rustling of female dress!

They are ascending. They are Madame Seguin—Adele—Zöe.

I look at the mother—at her features. They, too, are shaded by a melancholy expression. Why is she not happy? Why not joyous, having recovered a long-lost, much-loved child? Ah! *she has not yet recovered her!*

I turn my eyes on the daughter—the elder one—the queen. That is the strongest expression of all.

Have you seen the captive ocelot? Have you seen the wild bird, that refuses to be tamed, but against the bars of its cage prison still beats its bleeding wings? If so, it may help you to fancy that expression. I cannot depict it.

She is no longer in the Indian costume. That has been put aside. She wears the dress of civilized life; but, in despite, she wears it. She has shown this, for the skirt is torn in several places; and the bodice, plucked open, displays her bosom—half nude—heaving under the wild thoughts that agitate it.

She accompanies them, but not as a companion. She has the air of a prisoner, the air of the eagle, whose wings have been clipped. She regards neither mother nor sister. Their constant kindness has failed to impress her.

The mother has led her to the azotea, and let go her hand. She walks no longer with them; but crouching, and in starts, from place to place, obedient to the impulse of sinister emotions!

She has reached the western wing of the azotea, and stands close up against the parapet, gazing over—gazing upon the Mimbres! She knows them well, those peaks of sparkling selenite, those watchtowers of the desert land—she knows them well. Her heart is with her eyes.

We stand watching her; all of us. She is the common solicitude. She it is that keeps between all hearts and the light. The father looks sadly on, the mother looks sadly on, Zöe looks sadly on, St. Vrain too. No! that is a different expression. *His* gaze is the gaze of——

She has turned suddenly. She perceives that we are all regarding her with attention. Her eyes wander from one to the other. They are fixed upon the glances of St. Vrain!

A change comes over her countenance—a sudden change—from

dark to bright, like the cloud passing from the sun. Her eye is fired by a new expression. I know it well. I have seen it before ; not in *her* eyes, but in those that resemble them, the eyes of her sister. I know it well. It is *the light of love!*

St. Vrain! His too are lit by a similar emotion! Happy St. Vrain! Happy that it is mutual. As yet he knows not that, but I do. I could bless him with a single word.

Moments pass. Their eyes mingle in fiery communion. They gaze *into* each other. Neither can avert their glances. A god rules them—the god of love!

The proud and energetic attitude of the girl gradually forsakes her, her features relax, her eye swims with a softer expression, and her whole bearing seems to have undergone a change.

She sinks down upon a bench. Her back leans against the parapet. She no longer turns to the west. She no longer gazes upon the Mimbres. Her heart is no longer in the desert land!

No ; it is with her eyes, and these rest almost continuously on St. Vrain. They wander, at intervals, over the stones of the azotea ; then her thoughts do not go with them, but they ever return to the same object, to gaze upon it tenderly, more tenderly at each new glance.

The anguish of captivity is over. She no longer desires to escape. There is no prison where *he* dwells. It is now a paradise. Henceforth the doors may be thrown freely open. That little bird will make no farther effort to fly from its cage. It is tamed.

What memory, friendship, entreaties, have failed to effect, love has accomplished in a single instant. Love, mysterious power, in one pulsation, has transformed that wild heart, has drawn it from the desert.

I fancy that Seguin has noticed all this, for he is observing her movements with attention. I fancy that such thoughts are passing in *his* mind, and that they are not unpleasing to him, for he looks less afflicted than before. But I do not continue to watch the scene. A dearer interest summons me aside ; and, obedient to the sweet impulse, I stray toward the southern angle of the azotea.

I am not alone. My betrothed is by my side ; and our hands, like our hearts, are locked in each other.

There is no secrecy about our love. With Zöe, there never was.

Nature had prompted the passion. She knew not the conventionalities of the world, of society, of circles refined, *soi disant*. She knew not that love was a passion to be ashamed of.

Hitherto no presence had restrained her in its expression. Not even that—to lovers of less pure design, awe-inspiring above all others—the presence of the parent. Alone, or in their company, there is no difference in her conduct. She knows not the hypocrisies of artificial natures, the restraints, the intrigues, the agonies of atoms that *act*. She knows not the terror of guilty

minds. She obeys only the impulse her Creator has kindled within her.

With me it was otherwise. I had shouldered society—though not much then—enough to make me less proud of love's purity—enough to render me slightly sceptical of it. But through her I had now escaped from that scepticism. I had become a faithful believer in the nobility of the passion.

Our love was sanctioned by those who alone possessed the right to sanction it. It was sanctified by its own purity.

We are gazing upon a fair scene, fairer now at the sunset hour. The sun is no longer upon the stream, but his rays slant through the frondage of the cotton trees that fringe it; and, here and there, a yellow beam is flung transversely on the water. The forest is dappled by the high tints of autumn. There are green leaves and red ones—some of a golden colour, and others of dark maroon. Under this bright mosaic, the river winds away like a giant serpent, hiding its head in the darker woods of El Paso.

We command a view of all this, for we are above the landscape. We see the brown houses of the village, with the shining vane of its church. Our eyes have often rested upon that vane in happy hours; but none happier than now, for our hearts are full of happiness.

We talk of the past as well as the present, for Zoë has now seen something of life. Its darker pictures, it is true, but these are often the most pleasant to be remembered; and her desert experience has furnished her with many a new thought, the cue to many an inquiry.

The future becomes the subject of our converse. *It* is all bright, though a long and even perilous journey is before us. We think not of that. We look beyond it to that promised hour when *I* am to teach, and *she* to learn, "what is to marry."

Some one is touching the strings of a bandolon. We look around. Madame Seguin is seated upon a bench, holding the instrument in her hands. She is tuning it. As yet she has not played. There has been no music since our return.

It is by Seguin's request that the instrument has been brought up—with the music to chase away heavy memories; or, perhaps, from a hope that it may soothe those savage ones, he fancies still dwelling in the bosom of his child.

Madame Seguin is about to play; and my companion and I go nearer to listen.

Seguin and St. Vrain are conversing apart. Adele is still seated where we left her, silent and abstracted. The chording of the instrument had already attracted her attention. She had looked upon it with a gaze of curiosity; but as yet no music had been played, and she had ceased to wonder.

The playing commences. It is a merry air—a fandango; one of those to which the Andalusian foot delights to keep time.

Seguin and St. Vrain have turned. We all stand looking in the face of Adele. We endeavour to read its expression.

The first notes have startled her from her attitude of abstraction. Her eyes wander from one to the other—from the instrument to the player—with looks of wonder, of inquiry.

The music continues. The girl has risen, and as if mechanically, approaches the bench where her mother is seated. She crouches down by the feet of the latter, placing her ear close up to the instrument, and listening attentively. There is a singular expression upon her face.

I look at Seguin. That upon his is not less singular. His eye is fixed upon the girl's, gazing with intensity. His lips are apart, yet he seems not to breathe. His arms hang neglected, and he is leaning forward, as if to read the thoughts that are passing within her.

He starts erect again, as though under the impulse of some sudden resolution.

"O, Adele! Adele!" he cries, hurriedly addressing his wife, "O sing that song, that sweet hymn, you remember, you used to sing it to her often, often. You remember it, Adele! Look at her. Quick! quick! O God! Perhaps she may ——."

He is interrupted by the music. The mother has caught his meaning; and, with the adroitness of a practised player, suddenly changes the tune to one of a far different character. I recognise the beautiful Spanish hymn, "La madre a su hija" (The mother to her child). She sings it, accompanying her voice with the bandolon. She throws all her energy into the song, until the strain seems inspired. She gives the words with full and passionate effect:—

"Tu duermes, Cara nina!
 Tu duermes en la paz.
 Los angeles del cielo—
 Los angeles guardan, guardan,
 Nina mia!—Ca—ra—mi——"

The song was interrupted by a cry, a cry of singular import, uttered by the girl. The first words of the hymn had caused her to start, and then listen, if possible, more attentively than ever. As the song proceeded, the singular expression we had noted, seemed to become every moment more marked and intense; and when the voice had reached the burden of the melody, a strange exclamation escaped her lips; and, springing to her feet, she stood gazing wildly in the face of the singer. Only for a moment. The next moment, she cried in loud passionate accents, "Mama! mama!" and fell forward upon the bosom of her mother!


Seguin spoke truly when he said, "*Perhaps in God's mercy she may yet remember.*" She had remembered; not only her mother but in a short time, she remembered *him*. The chords of

memory had been touched—its gates thrown open. She remembered the history of her childhood. She remembered all!

I will not essay to describe the scene that followed. I will not attempt to picture the expression of the actors—to speak of their joyous exclamations, mingled with sobs and tears; but those were tears of joy.

All of us were happy, happy to exultation, but, for Seguin himself, I knew *it was the hour of his life.*

THE END.

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